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*"Between two servants of Humanity, who appeared eighteen hundred years apart, there is a mysterious relation. * * * * Let us say it with a sentiment of profound respect: JESUS WEPT: VOLTAIRE SMILED. Of that divine tear and of that human smile is composed the sweetness of the present civilization."*

VICTOR HUGO.

THE WORKS OF

VOLTAIRE

A CONTEMPORARY VERSION

THE RT. HON. JOHN MORLEY

"UNGRATEFUL SEID, THOU HAST SLAIN ME; NOW THOU WEEPEST; ALAS, TOO LATE"

VOLUME XVI

E. R. DUMONT

EDITION DE LA PACIFICATION

THE WORKS OF

VOLTAIRE

A CONTEMPORARY VERSION

With Notes by Tobias Smollett, Revised and Modernized
New Translations by William F. Fleming, and an
Introduction by Oliver H. G. Leigh

A CRITIQUE AND BIOGRAPHY
BY
THE RT. HON. JOHN MORLEY

FORTY-THREE VOLUMES

ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-EIGHT DESIGNS, COMPRISING REPRODUCTIONS
OF RARE OLD ENGRAVINGS, STEEL PLATES, PHOTOGRAVURES,
AND CURIOUS FAC-SIMILES

VOLUME XVI

E. R. DuMONT
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THE DRAMATIC WORKS

OF

VOLTAIRE

IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOL. II

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MAHOMET.

This powerful work was read by Voltaire to Frederick of Prussia in 1740, to the king's great delight. The following correspondence has peculiar interest. In his "Life of Voltaire" James Parton says: "The great lesson of the play is that the founders of false religions at once despise and practise upon the docile credulity of men. When I remember that this powerful exhibition of executive force triumphing over credulity and weakness was vividly stamped upon the susceptible brain of Frederick by Voltaire's impassioned declamation, at the very time he was revolving his Silesian project, I am inclined to the conjecture that it may have been the deciding influence upon the king's mind." The play was withdrawn after the fourth representation, under pressure of Church authorities who professed to see in it a "bloody satire against the Christian religion." This letter preserves the original characteristics.

TO HIS MAJESTY

THE KING OF PRUSSIA.

ROTTERDAM, January 20, 1742.

SIR: I am at present, like the pilgrims of Mecca, turning their eyes perpetually towards that city after leaving it, as I do mine towards the court of Prussia. My heart, deeply penetrated with the sense of your majesty's goodness, knows no grief but that which arises from my incapacity of being always

with you. I have taken the liberty to send your majesty a fresh copy of "Mahomet," the sketch of which you have seen some time ago. This is a tribute which I pay to the lover of arts, the sensible critic, and above all, to the philosopher much more than to the sovereign. Your majesty knows by what motive I was inspired in the composition of that work. The love of mankind, and the hatred of fanaticism, two virtues that adorn your throne, guided my pen: I have ever been of opinion, that tragedy should correct, as well as move the heart. Of what consequence or importance to mankind are the passions or misfortunes of any of the heroes of antiquity, if they do not convey some instruction to us? It is universally acknowledged, that the comedy of "Tartuffe," a piece hitherto unequalled, did a great deal of good in the world, by showing hypocrisy in its proper light; and why therefore should we not endeavor in a tragedy to expose that species of imposture which sets to work the hypocrisy of some, and the madness of others? Why may we not go back to the histories of those ancient ruffians, the illustrious founders of superstition and fanaticism, who first carried the sword to the altar to sacrifice all those who refused to embrace their doctrines?

They who tell us that these days of wickedness are past, that we shall never see any more Barcochebas, Mahomets, Johns of Leyden, etc., and that the flames of religious war are totally extinguished, in my opinion, pay too high a compliment to human nature. The same poison still subsists, though it does not appear so openly—some symptoms of this plague break out from time to time—enough to infect the earth: have not we in our own age seen the

prophets of Cévennes killing in the name of God those of their sect, who were not sufficiently pliant to their purposes?

The action I have described is terrible; I do not know whether horror was ever carried farther on any stage. A young man born with virtuous inclinations, seduced by fanaticism, assassinates an old man who loves him; and whilst he imagines he is serving God, is, without knowing it, guilty of parricide: the murder is committed by the order of an impostor, who promises him a reward, which proves to be incest. This, I acknowledge, is full of horror; but your majesty is thoroughly sensible, that tragedy should not consist merely of love, jealousy, and marriage: even our histories abound in actions much more horrible than that which I have invented. *Seid* does not know that the person whom he assassinates is his father, and when he has committed the crime, feels the deepest remorse for it; but *Mézeray* tells us, that at *Milan* a father killed his son with his own hand on account of religion, and was not in the least sorry for it. The story of the two brothers *Diaz* is well known; one of them was at *Rome* and the other in *Germany,* in the beginning of the commotions raised by *Luther: Bartholomew Diaz,* hearing that his brother embraced the opinion of *Luther* at Frankfort, left Rome on purpose to assassinate him, and accordingly did so. *Herrera,* a Spanish author, tells us, that *Bartholomew Diaz* ran a great hazard in doing this, but nothing intimidates a man of honor guided by honesty. *Herrera,* we see, brought up in that holy religion which is an enemy to cruelty, a religion which teaches long-suffering and not revenge, was persuaded that honesty might make a man an assassin and a parricide:

ought we not to rise up on all sides against such infernal maxims? These put the poniard into the hand of that monster who deprived France of *Henry the Great:* these placed the picture of *James Clement* on the altar, and his name amongst the saints: these took away the life of *William,* prince of Orange, founder of the liberty and prosperity of his country. *Salcede* shot at and wounded him in the forehead with a pistol; and *Strada* tells us, that *Salcede* would not dare to undertake that enterprise till he had purified his soul by confession at the feet of a Dominican, and fortified it by the holy sacrament. *Herrera* has something more horrible, and more ridiculous concerning it. "He stood firm," says he, "after the example of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and His saints." Balthasar Girard, who afterwards took away the life of that great man, behaved in the same manner as *Salcede.*

I have remarked, that all those who voluntarily committed such crimes were young men like *Seid. Balthasar Girard* was about twenty years old, and the four Spaniards who had bound themselves by oath with him to kill the prince, were of the same age. The monster who killed *Henry III.,* was but four-and-twenty, and *Poltrot,* who assassinated the great *Duke of Guise* only twenty-five: this is the age of seduction and madness. In England I was once a witness to how far the power of fanaticism could work on a weak and youthful imagination: a boy of sixteen, whose name was *Shepherd,* engaged to assassinate King *George I.,* your majesty's grandfather by the mother's side. What could prompt him to such madness? the only reason to be assigned was, that *Shepherd* was not of the same religion with the king. They took pity on his youth, offered him his

pardon, and for a long time endeavored to bring him to repentance; but he always persisted in saying, it was better to obey God than man; and if they let him go, the first use he made of his liberty should be to kill the king: so that they were obliged at last to execute him as a monster, whom they despaired of bringing to any sense of reason.

I will venture to affirm that all who have seen anything of mankind must have remarked how easily nature is sometimes sacrificed to superstition: how many fathers have detested and disinherited their children! how many brothers have persecuted brothers on this destructive principle! I have myself seen instances of it in more than one family.

If superstition does not always signalize itself in those glaring crimes which history transmits to us, in society it does every day all the mischief it possibly can: disunites friends, separates kindred and relations, destroys the wise and worthy by the hands of fools and enthusiasts: it does not indeed every day poison a *Socrates,* but it banishes *Descartes* from a city which ought to be the asylum of liberty, and gives *Jurieu,* who acted the part of a prophet, credit enough to impoverish the wise philosopher *Bayle:* it banished the successor of the great *Leibnitz,* and deprives a noble assembly of young men that crowded to his lectures, of pleasure and improvement: and to re-establish him heaven must raise up amongst us a royal philosopher, that true miracle which is so rarely to be seen. In vain does human reason advance towards perfection, by means of that philosophy which of late has made so great a progress in Europe: in vain do you, most noble prince, both inspire and practise this humane philosophy: whilst in the same age wherein reason

raises her throne on one side, the most absurd fanaticism adorns her altars on the other.

It may perhaps be objected to me, that, out of my too abundant zeal, I have made *Mahomet* in this tragedy guilty of a crime which in reality he was not capable of committing. The count de *Boulainvilliers,* some time since, wrote the life of this prophet, whom he endeavored to represent as a great man, appointed by Providence to punish the Christian world, and change the face of at least one-half of the globe. Mr. Sale likewise, who has given us an excellent translation of the Koran into English, would persuade us to look upon *Mahomet* as a *Numa* or a *Theseus.* I will readily acknowledge, that we ought to respect him, if born a legitimate prince, or called to government by the voice of the people, he had instituted useful and peaceful laws like *Numa,* or like *Theseus* defended his countrymen: but for a driver of camels to stir up a faction in his village; to associate himself with a set of wretched Koreish, and persuade them that he had an interview with the angel *Gabriel;* to boast that he was carried up to heaven, and there received part of that unintelligible book which contradicts common sense in every page; that in order to procure respect for this ridiculous performance he should carry fire and sword into his country, murder fathers, and ravish their daughters, and after all give those whom he conquered the choice of his religion or death; this is surely what no man will pretend to vindicate, unless he was born a Turk, and superstition had totally extinguished in him the light of nature.

Mahomet, I know, did not actually commit that particular crime which is the subject of this tragedy:

history only informs us, that he took away the wife of *Seid,* one of his followers, and persecuted *Abusophan,* whom I call *Zopir;* but what is not that man capable of, who, in the name of God, makes war against his country? It was not my design merely to represent a real fact, but real manners and characters, to make men think as they naturally must in their circumstances; but above all it was my intention to show the horrid schemes which villainy can invent, and fanaticism put in practice. Mahomet is here no more than *Tartuffe* in arms.

Upon the whole I shall think myself amply rewarded for my labor, if any one of those weak mortals, who are ever ready to receive the impressions of a madness foreign to their nature, should learn from this piece to guard themselves against such fatal delusions; if, after being shocked at the dreadful consequences of *Seid's* obedience, he should say to himself, why must I blindly follow the blind who cry out to me, hate, persecute all who are rash enough not to be of the same opinion with ourselves, even in things and matters we do not understand? what infinite service would it be to mankind to eradicate such false sentiments! A spirit of indulgence would make us all brothers; a spirit of persecution can create nothing but monsters. This I know is your majesty's opinion: to live with such a prince, and such a philosopher, would be my greatest happiness; my sincere attachment can only be equalled by my regret; but if other duties draw me away, they can never blot out the respect I owe to a prince, who talks and thinks like a man, who despises that specious gravity which is always a cover for meanness and ignorance: a prince who converses with freedom, because he is not afraid of

being known; who is still eager to be instructed, and at the same time capable himself of instructing the most learned and the most sagacious.

I shall, whilst I have life, remain with the most profound respect, and deepest sense of gratitude, your majesty's, VOLTAIRE.

A LETTER FROM M. DE VOLTAIRE TO POPE BENEDICT XIV.

Most blessed Father—

Your holiness will pardon the liberty taken by one of the lowest of the faithful, though a zealous admirer of virtue, of submitting to the head of the true religion this performance, written in opposition to the founder of a false and barbarous sect. To whom could I with more propriety inscribe a satire on the cruelty and errors of a false prophet, than to the vicar and representative of a God of truth and mercy? Your holiness will therefore give me leave to lay at your feet both the piece and the author of it, and humbly to request your protection of the one, and your benediction upon the other; in hopes of which, with the profoundest reverence, I kiss your sacred feet.

Paris, August 17, 1745. VOLTAIRE.

THE ANSWER OF POPE BENEDICT XIV. TO M. DE VOLTAIRE.

Benedictus P. P. dilecto filio salutem & Apostolicam Benedictionem.

This day sevennight I was favored with your

excellent tragedy of *Mahomet,* which I have read with great pleasure: Cardinal Passionei has likewise presented me with your fine poem of *Fontenoy.* Signor Leprotti this day repeated to me your distich made on my retreat. Yesterday morning Cardinal *Valenti* gave me your letter of the 17th of *August.* Many are the obligations which you have conferred on me, for which I am greatly indebted to you, for all and every one of them; and I assure you that I have the highest esteem for your merit, which is so universally acknowledged.

The distich has been published at Rome, and objected to by one of the *literati,* who, in a public conversation, affirmed that there was a mistake in it with regard to the word *hic,* which is made short, whereas it ought to be always long. To which I replied, that it may be either long or short; Virgil having made it short in this verse,

Solus hic inflexit sensus, animumque labantem.

And long in another,

Hic finis Priami fatorum, hic exitus illum.

The answer I think was pretty full and convincing, considering that I have not looked into Virgil these fifty years. The cause, however, is properly yours; to your honor and sincerity, therefore, of which I have the highest opinion, I shall leave it to be defended against your opposers and mine, and here give you my apostolical benediction. *Datum Romæ apud sanctam Mariam majorem die* 19 *Sept. Pontificatus nostri anno sexto.*

A Letter of Thanks from M. de Voltaire to the Pope.

The features of your excellency are not better

expressed on the medal you were so kind as to send me, than are the features of your mind in the letter which you honored me with: permit me to lay at your feet my sincerest acknowledgments: in points of literature, as well as in matters of more importance, your infallibility is not to be disputed: your excellency is much better versed in the *Latin* tongue than the *Frenchman* whom you condescended to correct: I am indeed astonished how you could so readily appeal to *Virgil:* the popes were always ranked amongst the most learned sovereigns, but amongst them I believe there never was one in whom so much learning and taste united.

Agnosco rerum dominos, gentemque togatam.

If the Frenchman who found fault with the word *hic* had known as much of Virgil as your excellency, he might have recollected a verse where *hic* is both long and short.

Hic vir hic est tibi quem promitti sæpius audis.

I cannot help considering this verse as a happy presage of the favors conferred on me by your excellency. Thus might Rome cry out when Benedict XIV. was raised to the papacy: with the utmost respect and gratitude I kiss your sacred feet, etc.

VOLTAIRE.

MAHOMET

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MAHOMET.

ZOPIR, Sheik of Mecca.

OMAR, { General and second in command to Mahomet.

SEID, PALMIRA, } Slaves to Mahomet.

PHANOR, Senator of Mecca.

Company of Meccans.

Company of Mussulmans.

SCENE, MECCA.

MAHOMET.

ACT I. SCENE I.

ZOPIR, PHANOR.

ZOPIR.

Thinkest thou thy friend will ever bend the knee
To this proud hypocrite; shall I fall down
And worship, I who banished him from Mecca?
No: punish me, just heaven, as I deserve,
If e'er this hand, the friend of innocence
And freedom, stoop to cherish foul rebellion,
Or aid imposture to deceive mankind!

PHANOR.

Thy zeal is noble, and becomes the chief
Of Ishmael's sacred senate, but may prove
Destructive to the cause it means to serve:
Thy ardor cannot check the rapid power
Of Mahomet, and but provokes his vengeance:
There was a time when you might safely draw
The sword of justice, to defend the rights
Of Mecca, and prevent the flames of war
From spreading o'er the land; then Mahomet
Was but a bold and factious citizen,
But now he is a conqueror, and a king;
Mecca's impostor at Medina shines
A holy prophet; nations bend before him,
And learn to worship crimes which we abhor.
Even here, a band of wild enthusiasts, drunk
With furious zeal, support his fond delusions,

His idle tales, and fancied miracles:
These spread sedition through the gaping throng,
Invite his forces, and believe a God
Inspires and renders him invincible.
The lovers of their country think with you,
But wisest counsels are not always followed;
False zeal, and fear, and love of novelty
Alarm the crowd; already half our city
Is left unpeopled; Mecca cries aloud
To thee her father, and demands a peace.

ZOPIR.

Peace with a traitor! coward nation, what
Can you expect but slavery from a tyrant!
Go, bend your supple knees, and prostrate fall
Before the idol whose oppressive hand
Shall crush you all: for me, I hate the traitor;
This heart's too deeply wounded to forgive:
The savage murderer robbed me of a wife
And two dear children: nor is his resentment
Less fierce than mine; I forced his camp, pursued
The coward to his tent, and slew his son:
The torch of hatred is lit up between us,
And time can never extinguish it.

PHANOR.

I hope
It never will; yet thou shouldst hide the flame,
And sacrifice thy griefs to public good:
What if he lay this noble city waste,
Will that avenge thee, will that serve thy cause?
Thou hast lost all, son, brother, daughter, wife.
Mecca alone remains to give thee comfort,
Do not lose that, do not destroy thy country.

ZOPIR.

Kingdoms are lost by cowardice alone.

PHANOR.

As oft perhaps by obstinate resistance.

ZOPIR.

Then let us perish, if it be our fate.

PHANOR.

When thou art almost in the harbor, thus
To brave the storm is false and fatal courage:
Kind heaven, thou seest, points out to thee the means
To soften this proud tyrant; fair Palmira,
Thy beautous captive, brought up in the camp
Of this destructive conqueror, was sent
By gracious heaven, the messenger of peace,
Thy guardian angel, to appease the wrath
Of Mahomet; already by his herald
He has demanded her.

ZOPIR.

And wouldst thou have me
Give up so fair a prize to this barbarian?
What! whilst the tyrant spreads destruction round
him,
Unpeoples kingdoms, and destroys mankind,
Shall beauty's charms be sacrificed to bribe
A madman's frenzy? I should envy him
That lovely fair one more than all his glory;
Not that I feel the stings of wild desire,
Or, in the evening of my days, indulge,
Old as I am, a shameless passion for her;
But, whether objects born like her to please,
Spite of ourselves, demand our tenderest pity,
Or that perhaps a childless father hopes
To find in her another daughter, why
I know not, but for that unhappy maid
Still am I anxious; be it weakness in me,

Or reason's powerful voice, I cannot bear
To see her in the hands of Mahomet;
Would I could mould her to my wishes, form
Her willing mind, and make her hate the tyrant
As I do! She has sent to speak with me
Here in the sacred porch—and lo! she comes:
On her fair cheek the blush of modesty
And candor speaks the virtues of her heart.

SCENE II.

ZOPIR, PALMIRA.

ZOPIR.

Hail, lovely maid! the chance of cruel war
Hath made thee Zopir's captive, but thou art not
Amongst barbarians; all with me revere
Palmira's virtues, and lament her fate,
Whilst youth with innocence and beauty plead
Thy cause; whatever thou askest in Zopir's power,
Thou shalt not ask in vain: my life declines
Towards its period, and if my last hours
Can give Palmira joy, I shall esteem them
The best, the happiest I have ever known.

PALMIRA.

These two months past, my lord, your prisoner here,
Scarce have I felt the yoke of slavery;
Your generous hand, still raised to soothe affliction,
Hath wiped the tears of sorrow from my eyes,
And softened all the rigor of my fate:
Forgive me, if emboldened by your goodness
I ask for more, and centre every hope
Of future happiness on you alone;
Forgive me, if to Mahomet's request

I join Palmira's, and implore that freedom
He hath already asked: O listen to him,
And let me say, that after heaven and him
I am indebted most to generous Zopir.

ZOPIR.

Has then oppression such enticing charms
That thou shouldst wish and beg to be the slave
Of Mahomet, to hear the clash of arms,
With him to live in deserts, and in caves,
And wander o'er his ever shifting country?

PALMIRA.

Where'er the mind with ease and pleasure dwells,
There is our home, and there our native country:
He formed my soul; to Mahomet I owe
The kind instruction of my earlier years;
Taught by the happy partners of his bed,
Who still adoring and adored by him
Send up their prayers to heaven for his dear safety,
I lived in peace and joy! for ne'er did woe
Pollute that seat of bliss till the sad hour
Of my misfortune, when wide-wasting war
Rushed in upon us and enslaved Palmira:
Pity, my lord, a heart oppressed with grief,
That sighs for objects far, far distant from her.

ZOPIR.

I understand you, madam; you expect
The tyrant's hand, and hope to share his throne.

PALMIRA.

I honor him, my lord; my trembling soul
Looks up to Mahomet with holy fear
As to a god; but never did this heart
E'er cherish the vain hope that he would deign

To wed Palmira: No: such splendor ill
Would suit my humble state.

ZOPIR.

Whoe'er thou art,
He was not born, I trust, to be thy husband,
No, nor thy master; much I err, or thou
Springest from a race designed by heaven to check
This haughty Arab, and give laws to him
Who thus assumes the majesty of kings.

PALMIRA.

Alas! we know not what it is to boast
Of birth or fortune; from our infant years
Without or parents, friends, or country, doomed
To slavery; here resigned to our hard fate,
Strangers to all but to that God we serve,
We live content in humble poverty.

ZOPIR.

And can ye be content? and are ye strangers,
Without a father, and without a home?
I am a childless, poor, forlorn, old man;
You might have been the comfort of my age:
To form a plan of future happiness
For you, had softened my own wretchedness,
And made me some amends for all my wrongs:
But you abhor my country and my law.

PALMIRA.

I am not mistress of myself, and how
Can I be thine? I pity thy misfortunes,
And bless thee for thy goodness to Palmira;
But Mahomet has been a father to me.

ZOPIR.

A father! ye just gods! the vile impostor!

PALMIRA.

Can he deserve that name, the holy prophet,
The great ambassador of heaven, sent down
To interpret its high will?

ZOPIR.

Deluded mortals!
How blind ye are, to follow this proud madman,
This happy robber, whom my justice spared,
And raise him from the scaffold to a throne!

PALMIRA.

My lord, I shudder at your imprecations;
Though I am bound by honor and the ties
Of gratitude to love thee for thy bounties,
This blasphemy against my kind protector
Cancels the bond, and fills my soul with horror.
O superstition, how thy savage power
Deprives at once the best and tenderest hearts
Of their humanity!

ZOPIR.

Alas! Palmira,
Spite of myself, I feel for thy misfortunes,
Pity thy weakness, and lament thy fate.

PALMIRA.

You will not grant me then——

ZOPIR.

I cannot yield thee
To him who has deceived thy easy heart,
To a base tyrant; No: thou art a treasure
Too precious to be parted with, and makest
This hypocrite but more detested.

SCENE III.

ZOPIR, PALMIRA, PHANOR.

ZOPIR.

Phanor,
What wouldst thou?

PHANOR.

At the city gate that leads
To Moad's fertile plain, the valiant Omar
Is just arrived.

ZOPIR.

Indeed; the tyrant's friend,
The fierce, vindictive Omar, his new convert,
Who had so long opposed him, and still fought
For us!

PHANOR.

Perhaps he yet may serve his country,
Already he hath offered terms of peace;
Our chiefs have parleyed with him, he demands
An hostage, and I hear they've granted him
The noble Seid.

PALMIRA.

Seid? gracious heaven!

PHANOR.

Behold! my lord, he comes.

ZOPIR.

Ha! Omar here!
There's no retreating now, he must be heard;
Palmira, you may leave us.—O ye gods
Of my forefathers, you who have protected

The sons of Ishmael these three thousand years,
And thou, O Sun, with all those sacred lights
That glitter round us, witness to my truth,
Aid and support me in the glorious conflict
With proud iniquity!

SCENE IV.

ZOPIR, OMAR, PHANOR, *Attendants.*

ZOPIR.

At length, it seems,
Omar returns, after a three years' absence,
To visit that loved country which his hand
So long defended, and his honest heart
Has now betrayed: deserter of our gods,
Deserter of our laws, how darest thou thus
Approach these sacred walls to persecute
And to oppress; a public robber's slave;
What is thy errand? wherefore comest thou hither?

OMAR.

To pardon thee: by me our holy prophet,
In pity to thy age, thy well-known valor,
And past misfortunes, offers thee his hand:
Omar is come to bring thee terms of peace.

ZOPIR.

And shall a factious rebel offer peace
Who should have sued for pardon? gracious gods!
Will ye permit him to usurp your power,
And suffer Mahomet to rule mankind?
Dost thou not blush, vile minion as thou art,
To serve a traitor? hast thou not beheld him
Friendless and poor, an humble citizen,

And ranking with the meanest of the throng?
How little then in fortune or in fame!

OMAR.

Thus low and grovelling souls like thine pretend
To judge of merit, whilst in fortune's scale
Ye weigh the worth of men: proud, empty being,
Dost thou not know that the poor worm which crawls
Low on the earth, and the imperial eagle
That soars to heaven, in the all-seeing eye
Of their eternal Maker are the same,
And shrink to nothing? men are equal all;
From virtue only true distinction springs,
And not from birth: there are exalted spirits
Who claim respect and honor from themselves
And not their ancestors: these, these, my lord,
Are heaven's peculiar care, and such is he
Whom I obey, and who alone deserves
To be a master; all mankind like me
Shall one day fall before the conqueror's feet,
And future ages follow my example.

ZOPIR.

Omar, I know thee well; thy artful hand
In vain hath drawn the visionary portrait;
Thou mayest deceive the multitude, but know,
What Mecca worships Zopir can despise:
Be honest then, and with the impartial eye
Of reason look on Mahomet; behold him
But as a mortal, and consider well
By what base arts the vile impostor rose,
A camel-driver, a poor abject slave,
Who first deceived a fond, believing woman,
And now supported by an idle dream
Draws in the weak and credulous multitude:

Condemned to exile, I chastised the rebel
Too lightly, and his insolence returns
With double force to punish my indulgence.
He fled with Fatima from cave to cave,
And suffered chains, contempt and banishment;
Meantime the fury which he called divine
Spread like a subtle poison through the crowd;
Medina was infected: Omar then,
To reason's voice attentive, would have stopped
The impetuous torrent; he had courage then
And virtue to attack the proud usurper,
Though now he crouches to him like a slave.
If thy proud master be indeed a prophet,
How didst thou dare to punish him? or why,
If an impostor, wilt thou dare to serve him?

OMAR.

I punished him because I knew him not;
But now, the veil of ignorance removed,
I see him as he is; behold him born
To change the astonished world, and rule mankind:
When I beheld him rise in awful pomp,
Intrepid, eloquent, by all admired,
By all adored; beheld him speak and act,
Punish and pardon like a god, I lent
My little aid, and joined the conqueror.
Altars, thou knowest, and thrones were our reward;
Once I was blind, like thee, but, thanks to heaven!
My eyes are opened now; would, Zopir, thine
Were open, too! let me entreat thee, change,
As I have done; no longer boast thy zeal
And cruel hatred, nor blaspheme our God,
But fall submissive at the hero's feet
Whom thou hast injured; kiss the hand that bears
The angry lightning, lest it fall upon thee.

Omar is now the second of mankind;
A place of honor yet remains for thee,
If prudent thou wilt yield, and own a master:
What we have been thou knowest, and what we are:
The multitude are ever weak and blind,
Made for our use, born but to serve the great,
But to admire, believe us, and obey:
Reign then with us, partake the feast of grandeur,
No longer deign to imitate the crowd,
But henceforth make them tremble.

ZOPIR.

Tremble thou,
And Mahomet, with all thy hateful train:
Thinkest thou that Mecca's faithful chief will fall
At an impostor's feet, and crown a rebel?
I am no stranger to his specious worth;
His courage and his conduct have my praise;
Were he but virtuous I like thee should love him;
But as he is I hate the tyrant: hence,
Nor talk to me of his deceitful mercy,
His clemency and goodness; all his aim
Is cruelty and vengeance: with this hand
I slew his darling son; I banished him:
My hatred is inflexible, and so
Is Mahomet's resentment: if he e'er
Re-enters Mecca, he must cut his way
Through Zopir's blood, for he is deeply stained
With crimes that justice never can forgive.

OMAR.

To show thee Mahomet is merciful,
That he can pardon though thou canst not, here
I offer thee the third of all our spoils
Which we have taken from tributary kings;
Name your conditions, and the terms of peace;

Set your own terms on fair Palmira; take
Our treasures, and be happy.

ZOPIR.

Thinkest thou Zopir
Will basely sell his honor and his country,
Will blast his name with infamy for wealth,
The foul reward of guilt, or that Palmira
Will ever own a tyrant for her master?
She is too virtuous e'er to be the slave
Of Mahomet, nor will I suffer her
To fall a sacrifice to base impostors
Who would subvert the laws, and undermine
The safety and the virtue of mankind.

OMAR.

Implacably severe; thou talkest to Omar
As if he were a criminal, and thou
His judge; but henceforth I would have thee act
A better part, and treat me as a friend,
As the ambassador of Mahomet,
A conqueror and a king.

ZOPIR.

A king! who made,
Who crowned him?

OMAR.

Victory: respect his glory,
And tremble at his power: amidst his conquests
The hero offers peace; our swords are still
Unsheathed, and woe to this rebellious city
If she submits not: think what blood must flow,
The blood of half our fellow-citizens;
Consider, Zopir, Mahomet is here,
And even now requests to speak with thee.

ZOPIR.

Ha! Mahomet!

OMAR.

Yes, he conjures thee.

ZOPIR.

Traitor!
Were I the sole despotic ruler here
He should be answered soon——by chastisement.

OMAR.

I pity, Zopir, thy pretended virtue;
But since the senate insolently claim
Divided empire with thee, to the senate
Let us begone; Omar will meet thee there.

ZOPIR.

I'll follow thee: we then shall see who best
Can plead his cause: I will defend my gods,
My country, and her laws; thy impious voice
Shall bellow for thy vengeful deity,
Thy persecuting god, and his false prophet.
[*Turning to Phanor.*
Haste, Phanor, and with me repulse the traitor;
Who spares a villain is a villain:—come,
Let us, my friend, unite to crush his pride,
Subvert his wily purposes, destroy him,
Or perish in the attempt: If Mecca listens
To Zopir's councils, I shall free my country
From a proud tyrant's power, and save mankind.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

SEID, PALMIRA.

PALMIRA.

Welcome, my Seid, do I see thee here
Once more in safety? what propitious god
Conducted thee? at length Palmira's woes
Shall have an end, and we may yet be happy.

SEID.

Thou sweetest charmer, balm of every woe,
Dear object of my wishes and my tears,
O since that day of blood when flushed with conquest
The fierce barbarian snatched thee from my arms,
When midst a heap of slaughtered friends I lay
Expiring on the ground, and called on death,
But called in vain, to end my hated being,
What have I suffered for my dear Palmira!
How have I cursed the tardy hours that long
Withheld my vengeance! my distracted soul's
Impatience thirsted for the bloody field,
That with these hands I might lay waste this seat
Of slavery, where Palmira mourned so long
In sad captivity; but thanks to heaven!
Our holy prophet, whose deep purposes
Are far beyond the ken of human wisdom,
Hath hither sent his chosen servant Omar;
I flew to meet him, they required a hostage;
I gave my faith, and they received it; firm
In my resolve to live or die for thee.

PALMIRA.

Seid, the very moment ere thou camest
To calm my fears, and save me from despair,
Was I entreating the proud ravisher;
Thou knowest, I cried, the only good on earth
I prized is left behind, restore it to me:
Then clasped his knees, fell at the tyrant's feet,
And bathed them with my tears, but all in vain:
How his unkind refusal shocked my soul!
My eyes grew dim, and motionless I stood
As one deprived of life; no succor nigh,
No ray of hope was left, when Seid came
To ease my troubled heart, and bring me comfort.

SEID.

Who could behold unmoved Palmira's woes?

PALMIRA.

The cruel Zopir; not insensible
He seemed to my misfortunes, yet at last
Unkindly told me, I must never hope
To leave these walls, for naught should tear me from
him.

SEID.

'Tis false; for Mahomet, my royal master,
With the victorious Omar, and forgive me,
If to these noble friends I proudly add
The name of Seid, these shall set thee free,
Dry up thy tears, and make Palmira happy:
The God of Mahomet, our great protector,
That God whose sacred standard I have borne;
He who destroyed Medina's haughty ramparts
Shall lay rebellious Mecca at our feet;
Omar is here, and the glad people look
With eyes of friendship on him; in the name

Of Mahomet he comes, and meditates
Some noble purpose.

PALMIRA.

Mahomet indeed
Might free us, and unite two hearts long since
Devoted to his cause; but he, alas!
Is far removed, and we abandoned captives.

SCENE II.

PALMIRA, SEID, OMAR.

OMAR.

Despair not; heaven perhaps may yet reward you,
For Mahomet and liberty are nigh.

SEID.

Is he then come?

PALMIRA.

Our friend and father?

OMAR.

Yes.

I met the council, and by Mahomet
Inspired, addressed them thus: "Within these walls,
Even here," I cried, "the favorite of heaven,
Our holy prophet, first drew breath; the great,
The mighty conqueror, the support of kings;
And will ye not permit him but to rank
As friend and fellow-citizen? he comes not
To ruin or enslave, but to protect,
To teach you and to save, to fix his power,
And hold dominion o'er the conquered heart."
I spoke; the hoary sages smiled applause,
And all inclined to favor us; but Zopir,

Still resolute and still inflexible,
Declared, the people should be called together,
And give their general voice: the people met,
Again I spoke, addressed the citizens,
Exhorted, threatened, practised every art
To win their favor, and at length prevailed;
The gates are opened to great Mahomet,
Who after fifteen years of cruel exile
Returns to bless once more his native land;
With him the gallant Ali, brave Hercides,
And Ammon the invincible, besides
A numerous train of chosen followers:
The people throng around him; some with looks
Of hatred, some with smiles of cordial love;
Some bless the hero, and some curse the tyrant:
Some threaten and blaspheme, whilst others fall
Beneath his feet, embrace and worship him;
Meantime the names of God, of peace, and freedom,
Are echoed through the all-believing crowd;
Whilst Zopir's dying party bellows forth
In idle threats its impotent revenge:
Amidst their cries, unruffled and serene,
In triumph walks the god-like Mahomet,
Bearing the olive in his hand; already
Peace is proclaimed, and see! the conqueror comes.

SCENE III.

MAHOMET, OMAR, HERCIDES, SEID, PALMIRA, *Attendants.*

MAHOMET.

My friends, and fellow-laborers, valiant Ali,
Morad, and Ammon, and Hercides, hence
To your great work, and in my name instruct

The people, lead them to the paths of truth,
Promise and threaten; let my God alone
Be worshipped, and let those who will not love
Be taught to fear him.—Seid, art thou here?

SEID.

My ever-honored father, and my king,
Led by that power divine who guided thee
To Mecca's walls, preventing your commands
I came, prepared to live or die with thee.

MAHOMET.

You should have waited for my orders; he
Who goes beyond his duty knows it not;
I am heaven's minister, and thou art mine;
Learn then of me to serve and to obey.

PALMIRA.

Forgive, my lord, a youth's impatient ardor:
Brought up together from our infant years,
The same our fortunes, and our thoughts the same:
Alas! my life has been a life of sorrow;
Long have I languished in captivity,
Far from my friends, from Seid, and from thee;
And now at last, when I beheld a ray
Of comfort shining on me, thy unkindness
Blasts my fair hopes, and darkens all the scene.

MAHOMET.

Palmira, 'tis enough: I know thy virtues;
Let naught disturb thee: spite of all my cares,
Glory, and empire, and the weight of war,
I will remember thee; Palmira still
Lives in my heart, and shares it with mankind:
Seid shall join our troops; thou, gentle maid,
Mayest serve thy God in peace: fear naught but
Zopir.

SCENE IV.

MAHOMET, OMAR.

MAHOMET.

Brave Omar, stay, for in thy faithful bosom
Will I repose the secrets of my soul:
The lingering progress of a doubtful siege
May stop our rapid course; we must not give
These weak deluded mortals too much time
To pry into our actions; prejudice
Rules o'er the vulgar with despotic sway.
Thou knowest there is a tale which I have spread
And they believe, that universal empire
Awaits the prophet, who to Mecca's walls
Shall lead his conquering bands, and bring her peace.
'Tis mine to mark the errors of mankind,
And to avail me of them; but whilst thus
I try each art to soothe this fickle people,
What thinks my friend of Seid and Palmira?

OMAR.

I think most nobly of them, that amidst
Those few staunch followers who own no God,
No faith but thine, who love thee as their father,
Their friend, and benefactor, none obey
Or serve thee with an humbler, better mind;
They are most faithful.

MAHOMET.

Omar, thou art deceived;
They are my worst of foes, they love each other.

OMAR.

And can you blame their tenderness?

MAHOMET.

My friend,
I'll tell thee all my weakness.

OMAR.

How, my lord!

MAHOMET.

Thou knowest the reigning passion of my soul;
Whilst proud ambition and the cares of empire
Weighed heavy on me, Mahomet's hard life
Has been a conflict with opposing Nature,
Whom I have vanquished by austerity,
And self-denial; have banished from me
That baleful poison which unnerves mankind,
Which only serves to fire them into madness,
And brutal follies; on the burning sand
Or desert rocks I brave the inclement sky,
And bear the seasons' rough vicissitude:
Love is my only solace, the dear object
Of all my toils, the idol I adore,
The god of Mahomet, the powerful rival
Of my ambition: know, midst all my queens,
Palmira reigns sole mistress of my heart:
Think then what pangs of jealousy thy friend
Must feel when she expressed her fatal passion
For Seid.

OMAR.

But thou art revenged.

MAHOMET.

Judge thou
If soon I ought not to take vengeance on them;
That thou mayest hate my rival more, I'll tell thee

Who Seid and Palmira are—the children
Of him whom I abhor, my deadliest foe.

OMAR.

Ha! Zopir!

MAHOMET.

Is their father: fifteen years
Are past since brave Hercides to my care
Gave up their infant years; they know not yet
Or who or what they are; I brought them up
Together; I indulged their lawless passion,
And added fuel to the guilty flame.
Methinks it is as if the hand of heaven
Had meant in them to centre every crime.
But I must—Ha! their father comes this way,
His eyes are full of bitterness and wrath
Against me—now be vigilant, my Omar,
Hercides must be careful to possess
This most important pass; return, and tell me
Whether 'tis most expedient to declare
Against him, or retreat: away.

SCENE V.

ZOPIR, MAHOMET.

ZOPIR.

Hard fate!
Unhappy Zopir! thus compelled to meet
My worst of foes, the foe of all mankind!

MAHOMET.

Since 'tis the will of heaven that Mahomet
And Zopir should at length unite, approach
Without a blush, and fearless tell thy tale.

ZOPIR.

I blush for thee alone, whose baneful arts
Have drawn thy country to the brink of ruin;
Who in the bosom of fair peace wouldst wage
Intestine war, loosen the sacred bonds
Of friendship, and destroy our happiness;
Beneath the veil of proffered terms thou meanest
But to betray, whilst discord stalks before thee:
Thou vile assemblage of hypocrisy
And insolence, abhorred tyrant! thus
Do the chosen ministers of heaven dispense
Its sacred blessings, and announce their God?

MAHOMET.

Wert thou not Zopir, I would answer thee
As thou deservest, in thunder, by the voice
Of that offended Being thou deridest:
Armed with the hallowed Koran I would teach thee
To tremble and obey in humble silence:
And with the subject world to kneel before me;
But I will talk to thee without disguise,
As man to man should speak, and friend to friend:
I have ambition, Zopir; where's the man
Who has it not? but never citizen,
Or chief, or priest, or king projected aught
So noble as the plan of Mahomet;
In acts or arms hath every nation shone
Superior in its turn; Arabia now
Steps forth; that generous people, long unknown
And unrespected, saw her glories sunk,
Her honors lost; but, lo! the hour is come
When she shall rise to victory and renown;
The world lies desolate from pole to pole;
India's slaves, and bleeding Persia mourns
Her slaughtered sons; whilst Egypt hangs the head

Dejected; from the walls of Constantine
Splendor is fled; the Roman Empire torn
By discord, sees its scattered members spread
On every side inglorious;—let us raise
Arabia on the ruins of mankind:
The blind and tottering universe demands
Another worship, and another God.
Crete had her Minos, Egypt her Osiris,
To Asia Zoroaster gave his laws,
And Numa was in Italy adored:
O'er savage nations where nor monarchs ruled
Nor manners softened, nor religion taught,
Hath many a sage his fruitless maxims spread;
Beneath a nobler yoke I mean to bend
The prostrate world, and change their feeble laws,
Abolish their false worship, pull down
Their powerless gods, and on my purer faith
Found universal empire: say not, Zopir,
That Mahomet betrays his country, no:
I mean but to destroy its weak supports,
And, banishing idolatry, unite it
Beneath one king, one prophet, and one God;
I shall subdue it but to make it glorious.

ZOPIR.

Is this thy purpose then, and darest thou thus
Avow it? canst thou change the hearts of men,
And make them think like thee? are war and slaughter
The harbingers of wisdom and of peace;
Can he who ravages instruct mankind?
If in the night of ignorance and error
We long have wandered, must thy dreadful torch
Enlighten us? What right hast thou to empire?

MAHOMET.

That right which firm, exalted spirits claim
O'er vulgar minds.

ZOPIR.

Thus every bold impostor
May forge new fetters, and enslave mankind:
He has a right, it seems, to cheat the world
If he can do it with an air of grandeur.

MAHOMET.

I know your people well; I know they want
A leader; my religion, true or false,
Is needful to them: what have all your gods
And all your idols done? what laurels grow
Beneath their altars? your low, grovelling sect
Debases man, unnerves his active soul,
And makes it heavy, phlegmatic, and mean;
Whilst mine exalts it, gives it strength and courage:
My law forms heroes.

ZOPIR.

Rather call them robbers:
Away; nor bring thy hateful lessons here;
Go to the school of tyrants, boast thy frauds
To lost Medina, where thou reignest supreme,
Where blinded bigots bend beneath thy power,
And thou beholdest thy equals at thy feet.

MAHOMET.

My equals! Mahomet has none; long since
I passed them all; Medina is my own,
And Mecca trembles at me; if thou holdest
Thy safety dear, receive the peace I offer.

ZOPIR.

Thou talkest of peace, but 'tis not in thy heart;
I'm not to be deceived.

MAHOMET.

I would not have thee;
The weak deceive, the powerful command:
To-morrow I shall force thee to submit;
To-day, observe, I would have been thy friend.

ZOPIR.

Can we be friends? can Mahomet and Zopir
E'er be united? say, what god shall work
A miracle like that?

MAHOMET.

I'll tell thee one,
A powerful God, one that is always heard,
By me he speaks to thee.

ZOPIR.

Who is it? name him.

MAHOMET.

Interest, thy own dear interest.

ZOPIR.

Sooner heaven
And hell shall be united; interest
May be the god of Mahomet, but mine
Is—justice: what shall join them to each other?
Where is the cement that must bind our friendship?
Is it that son I slew, or the warm blood
Of Zopir's house which thou has shed?

MAHOMET.

It is
Thy blood, thy son's——for now I will unveil
A secret to thee, known to none but me:
Thou weepest thy children dead; they both are—
living.

ZOPIR.

What sayest thou? living? unexpected bliss!
My children living?

MAHOMET.

Yes; and both—my prisoners.

ZOPIR.

My children slaves to thee? impossible!

MAHOMET.

My bounty nourished them.

ZOPIR.

And couldst thou spare
A child of Zopir's?

MAHOMET.

For their father's faults
I would not punish them.

ZOPIR.

But tell me, say,
For what are they reserved?

MAHOMET.

Their life or death
Depend on me: speak but the word, and thou
Art master of their fate.

ZOPIR.

O name the price
And thou shalt have it; must I give my blood,
Or must I bear their chains, and be the slave
Of Mahomet?

MAHOMET.

I ask not either of thee:
Lend me thy aid but to subdue the world;
Surrender Mecca to me, and give up
Your temple, bid the astonished people read
My sacred Koran; be thou my vassal,
And fall before me, then will I restore
Thy son, perhaps hereafter may reward thee
With honors, and contract a closer tie
With Zopir.

ZOPIR.

Mahomet, thou seest in me
A tender father: after fifteen years
Of cruel absence, to behold my children,
To die in their embraces, were the first
And fairest blessings that my soul could wish for,
But if to thee I must betray my country,
Or sacrifice my children, know, proud tyrant,
The choice is made already—fare thee well.

MAHOMET.

Inexorable dotard! but henceforth
I will be more implacable, more cruel
Even than thyself.

SCENE VI.

MAHOMET, OMAR.

OMAR.

And so indeed thou must be,
Or all is lost: already I have bought
Their secret counsels: Mahomet, to-morrow
The truce expires, and Zopir reassumes

His power; thy life's in danger: half the senate
Are leagued against thee: those who dare not fight
May hire the dark assassin to destroy thee;
May screen their guilt beneath the mask of justice,
And call the murder legal punishment.

MAHOMET.

First they shall feel my vengeance: persecution,
Thou knowest, has ever been my best support.
Zopir must die.

OMAR.

'Tis well resolved: his fate
Will teach the rest obedience: lose no time.

MAHOMET.

Yet, spite of my resentment, I must hide
The murderous hand that deals the blow, to 'scape
Suspicion's watchful eye, and not incense
The multitude.

OMAR.

They are not worth our care.

MAHOMET.

And yet they must be pleased: I want an arm
That will strike boldly.

OMAR.

Seid is the man;
I'll answer for him.

MAHOMET.

Seid?

OMAR.

Ay: the best,
The fittest instrument to serve our purpose:
As Zopir's hostage he may find occasion

To speak with him, and soon avenge his master.
Thy other favorites are too wise, too prudent
For such a dangerous enterprise; old age
Takes off the bandage of credulity
From mortal eyes; but the young, simple heart,
The willing slave to its own fond opinions,
And void of guile, will act as we direct it:
Youth is the proper period for delusion.
Seid, thou knowest, is superstitious, bold,
And violent, but easy to be led;
Like a tame lion, to his keeper's voice
Obedient.

MAHOMET.

What! the brother of Palmira?

OMAR.

Ay; Seid, the fierce son of thy proud foe,
The incestuous rival of great Mahomet,
His master's rival.

MAHOMET.

I detest him, Omar,
Abhor his very name; my murdered son
Cries out for vengeance on him; but thou knowest
The object of my love, and whence she sprung;
Thou seest I am oppressed on every side;
I would have altars, victims, and a throne;
I would have Zopir's blood, and Seid's too:
I must consult my interest, my revenge,
My honor, and my love, that fatal passion,
Which, spite of my resentment, holds this heart
In shameful chains: I must consult religion,
All powerful motive, and necessity
That throws a veil o'er every crime: away.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

SEID, PALMIRA.

PALMIRA.

O Seid, keep me not in dread suspense,
What is this secret sacrifice? what blood
Hath heaven demanded?

SEID.

The eternal power
Deigns to accept my service, calls on me
To execute its purposes divine;
To him this heart's devoted, and for him
This arm shall rise in vengeance; I am bound
To Omar and to Mahomet, have sworn
To perish in the glorious cause of heaven:
My next and dearest care shall be Palmira.

PALMIRA.

Why was not I a witness to thy oath?
Had I been with thee, I had been less wretched;
But doubts distract me: Omar talks of treason,
Of blood that soon must flow; the senate's rage,
And Zopir's dark intrigues: the flames of war
Once more are kindled, and the sword is drawn
Heaven only knows when to be sheathed again:
So says our prophet, he who cannot lie,
Cannot deceive us: O I fear for Seid,
Fear all from Zopir.

SEID.

Can he have a heart
So base and so perfidious? but this morning,

When as a hostage I appeared before him,
I thought him noble, generous, and humane;
Some power invincible in secret worked,
And won me to him; whether the respect
Due to his name, or specious form external
Concealed the blackness of his heart I know not;
Whether thy presence filled my raptured soul
With joy that drove out every painful sense,
And would not let me think of aught but thee:
Whate'er the cause, methought I was most happy
When nearest him: that he should thus seduce
My easy heart makes me detest him more;
And yet how hard it is to look on those
With eyes of hatred whom we wish to love!

PALMIRA.

By every bond hath heaven united us,
And Seid and Palmira are the same:
Were I not bound to thee, and to that faith
Which Mahomet inspires, I too had pleaded
The cause of Zopir; but religion, love,
And nature, all forbid it.

SEID.

Think no more
Of vain remorse, but listen to the voice
Of heaven, the God we serve will be propitious:
Our holy prophet who protects his children
Will bless our faithful love: for thy dear sake
I hazard all. Farewell.

SCENE II.

PALMIRA.

[*Alone.*

Some dark presage
Of future misery hangs o'er me still:
That love which made my happiness, this day,
So often wished for, is a day of horror:
What is this dreadful oath, this solemn compact
Which Seid talks of? I've a thousand fears
Upon me when I think of Zopir: oft
As I invoke great Mahomet, I feel
A secret dread, and tremble as I worship:
O save me, heaven! fearful I obey,
And blind I follow: O direct my steps
Aright, and deign to wash my tears away!

SCENE III.

MAHOMET, PALMIRA.

PALMIRA.

Propitious heaven hath heard my prayers; he comes,
The prophet comes. O gracious Mahomet,
My Seid——

MAHOMET.

What of him? thou seemest disturbed;
What should Palmira fear when I am with her!

PALMIRA.

Have I not cause when Mahomet himself
Seems touched with grief?

MAHOMET.

Perhaps it is for thee:
Darest thou, imprudent maid, avow a passion
Ere I approved it: is the heart I formed
Turned rebel to its master, to my laws
Unfaithful? O ingratitude!

PALMIRA.

My lord,
Behold me at your feet, and pity me:
Didst thou not once propitious smile upon us,
And give thy sanction to our growing love?
Thou knowest the virtuous passion that unites us
Is but a chain that binds us more to thee.

MAHOMET.

The bonds that folly and imprudence knit
Are dangerous; guilt doth sometimes follow close
The steps of innocence: our hearts deceive us,
And love, with all his store of dear delights,
May cost us tears, and dip his shafts in blood.

PALMIRA.

Nor would I murmur if it flowed for Seid.

MAHOMET.

Are you indeed so fond?

PALMIRA.

E'er since the day
When good Hercides to thy sacred power
Consigned us both, unconquerable instinct,
Still growing with our years, united us
In tender friendship; 'twas the work of heaven
That guides our every action, and o'errules
The fate of mortals; so thy doctrines teach:

God cannot change, nor gracious heaven condemn
That love itself inspired: what once was right
Is always so; canst thou then blame Palmira?

MAHOMET.

I can, and must; nay, thou wilt tremble more
When I reveal the horrid secret to thee.
Attend, rash maid, and let me teach thy soul
What to avoid, and what to follow: listen
To me alone.

PALMIRA.

To thee alone Palmira
Will listen ever, the obedient slave
Of Mahomet; this heart can never lose
Its veneration for thy sacred name.

MAHOMET.

That veneration in excess may lead
To foul ingratitude.

PALMIRA.

When I forget
Thy goodness, then may Seid punish me!

MAHOMET.

Seid!

PALMIRA.

O why, my lord, that cruel frown,
And look severe?

MAHOMET.

Be not alarmed; I meant
But to explore the secrets of thy heart,
And try if thou wert worthy to be saved:
Be confident, and rest on my protection;
On your obedience will depend your fate;
If ye expect a blessing at my hands,

Be careful to deserve it, and whate'er
The will of heaven determines touching Seid,
Be thou his guide, direct him in the paths
Of duty, and religion; let him keep
His promise, and be worthy of Palmira.

PALMIRA.

O he will keep it; doubt him not, my lord,
I'll answer for his heart as for my own;
Seid adores thee, worships Mahomet
More than he loves Palmira; thou art all
To him, his friend, his father, and his king:
I'll fly, and urge him to his duty.

SCENE IV.

MAHOMET.

[*Alone.*

Well:
Spite of myself I must, it seems, be made
A confidant; the simple girl betrayed
Her guilty flame, and innocently plunged
The dagger in my heart: unhappy race!
Father and children, all my foes, all doomed
To make me wretched! but ye soon shall prove
That dreadful is my hatred—and my love.

SCENE V.

MAHOMET, OMAR.

OMAR.

At length the hour is come, to seize Palmira,
To conquer Mecca, and to punish Zopir;

His death alone can prop our feeble cause,
And humble these proud citizens: brave Seid
Can best avenge thee; he has free access
To Zopir: yonder gloomy passage leads
To his abode; there the rebellious chief
His idle vows and flattering incense pours
Before his fancied deities; there Seid,
Full of the law divine by thee inspired,
Shall sacrifice the traitor to the God
Of Mahomet.

MAHOMET.

He shall: that youth was born
For crimes of deepest dye: he shall be first
My useful slave, my instrument, and then
The victim of my rage; it must be so:
My safety, my resentment, and my love,
My holy faith, and the decrees of fate
Irrevocable, all require it of me:
But thinkest thou, Omar, he hath all the warmth
Of wild fanaticism?

OMAR.

I know he has,
And suits our purpose well; Palmira, too,
Will urge him on; religion, love, resentment
Will blind his headstrong youth, and hurry him
To madness.

MAHOMET.

Hast thou bound him by an oath?

OMAR.

O yes; in all the gloomy pomp of rites
Nocturnal, oaths, and altars, we have fixed
His superstitious soul, placed in his hand
The sacred sword, and fired him with the rage
Of fierce enthusiasm—but behold him.

SCENE VI.

MAHOMET, OMAR, SEID.

MAHOMET.

Child
Of heaven, decreed to execute the laws
Of an offended God, now hear by me
His sacred will: thou must avenge his cause.

SEID.

O thou, to whom my soul devoted bends
In humblest adoration, king, and prophet,
Sovereign, acknowledged by the voice of heaven,
O'er prostrate nations—I am wholly thine:
But O enlighten my dark mind! O say,
How can weak man avenge his God?

MAHOMET.

Oft-times
Doth he make use of feeble hands like thine
To punish impious mortals, and assert
His power divine.

SEID.

Will he, whose perfect image
Is seen in Mahomet, thus condescend
To honor Seid?

MAHOMET.

Do as he ordains;
That is the highest honor man can boast,
Blindly to execute his great decree:
Be thankful for the choice, and strike the blow:
The angel of destruction shall assist,
The God of armies shall protect thee.

SEID.

Speak;
What tyrant must be slain? what blood must flow?

MAHOMET.

The murderer's blood whom Mahomet abhors,
Who persecutes our faith, and spurns our God,
Who slew my son; the worst of all my foes,
The cruel Zopir.

SEID.

Ha! must Zopir fall?

MAHOMET.

And dost thou pause? presumptuous youth! 'tis impious
But to deliberate: far from Mahomet
Be all who for themselves shall dare to judge
Audacious; those who reason are not oft
Prone to believe; thy part is to obey.
Have I not told thee what the will of heaven
Determines? if it be decreed that Mecca,
Spite of her crimes and base idolatry,
Shall be the promised temple, the chosen seat
Of empire, where I am appointed king,
And pontiff, knowest thou why our Mecca boasts
These honors? knowest thou holy Abram here
Was born, that here his sacred ashes rest?
He who, obedient to the voice of God,
Stifled the cries of nature, and gave up
His darling child: the same all-powerful Being
Requires of thee a sacrifice; to thee
He calls for blood; and darest thou hesitate
When God commands? hence, vile idolater,
Unworthy Mussulman, away, and seek
Another master; go, and love Palmira;

But thou despisest her, and bravest the wrath
Of angry heaven; away, forsake thy lord,
And serve his deadliest foes.

SEID.

It is the voice
Of God that speaks in Mahomet:—command,
And I obey.

MAHOMET.

Strike, then, and by the blood
Of Zopir merit life eternal.—Omar,
Attend and watch him well.

SCENE VII.

SEID.

[*Alone.*

To sacrifice
A poor, defenceless, weak old man!—no matter:
How many victims at the altar fall
As helpless! yet their blood in grateful streams
Rises to heaven: God hath appointed me;
Seid hath sworn, and Seid shall perform
His sacred promise:—O assist me now,
Illustrious spirits, you who have destroyed
The tyrants of the earth, O join your rage
To mine, O guide this trembling hand, and thou
Exterminating angel who defendest
The cause of Mahomet, inspire this heart
With all thy fierceness!—ha! what do I see?

SCENE VIII.

ZOPIR, SEID.

ZOPIR.

Seid, thou seemest disturbed; unhappy youth!
Why art thou ranked amongst my foes? my heart
Feels for thy woes, and trembles at thy danger;
Horrors on horrors crowd on every side;
My house may be a shelter from the storm.
Accept it, thou art welcome, for thy life
Is dear to Zopir.

SEID.

Gracious heaven! wilt thou
Protect me thus? will Zopir guard his foe?
What do I hear! O duty, conscience, virtue!
O Mahomet, this rives my heart.

ZOPIR.

Perhaps
Thou art surprised to find that I can pity
An enemy, and wish for Seid's welfare;
I am a man like thee; that tie alone
Demands at least a sympathetic tear
For innocence afflicted: gracious gods,
Drive from this earth those base and savage men,
Who shed with joy their fellow-creatures' blood.

SEID.

O glorious sentiments! and can there be
Such virtue in an infidel?

ZOPIR.

Thou knowest
But little of that virtue, thus to stand
Astonished at it! O mistaken youth,
In what a maze of errors art thou lost!
Bound by a tyrant's savage laws, thou thinkest
Virtue resides in Mussulmans alone;
Thy master rules thee with a rod of iron,
And shackles thy free soul in shameful bonds;
Zopir thou hatest, alas! thou knowest him not:
I pardon thee because thou art the slave
Of Mahomet; but how canst thou believe
A God who teaches hatred, and delights
In discord?

SEID.

O I never can obey him!
I know, and feel I cannot hate thee, Zopir.

ZOPIR.

Alas! the more I talk to him, the more
He gains upon me; his ingenuous look,
His youth, his candor, all conspire to charm me;
How could a follower of this vile impostor
Thus win my heart! who gave thee birth? what art thou?

SEID.

A wretched orphan; all I have on earth
Is a kind master, whom I never yet
Have disobeyed; howe'er my love for thee
May tempt me to betray him.

ZOPIR.

Knowest thou not
Thy parents then?

SEID.

His camp was the first object
My eyes beheld; his temple is my country;
I know no other; and amidst the crowd
Of yearly tributes to our holy prophet,
None e'er was treated with more tenderness
Than Seid was.

ZOPIR.

I love his gratitude:
Thy kind return for benefits received
Merits my praise:—O why did heaven employ
The hand of Mahomet in such an office?
He was thy father, and Palmira's, too;
Why dost thou sigh? why dost thou tremble thus?
Why turn thee from me? sure some dreadful thought
Hangs on thy mind.

SEID.

It must be so: the times
Are full of terror.

ZOPIR.

If thou feelest remorse
Thy heart is guiltless; murder is abroad,
Let me preserve thy life.

SEID.

O gracious heaven!
And can I have a thought of taking thine?
Palmira! O my oath! O God of vengeance!

ZOPIR.

For the last time remember I entreat thee
To follow me; away, thy fate depends
Upon this moment.

SCENE IX.

ZOPIR, SEID, OMAR.

OMAR.

[*Entering hastily.*

Traitor, Mahomet
Expects thee.

SEID.

O I know not where or what
I am; destruction, ruin and despair
On every side await me: whither now
Shall wretched Seid fly?

OMAR.

To him whom God
Hath chosen, thy injured king, and master.

SEID.

Yes:
And there abjure the dreadful oath I made.

SCENE X.

ZOPIR.

[*Alone.*

The desperate youth is gone—I know not why,
But my heart beats for his distress; his looks,
His pity, his remorse, his every action
Affect me deeply: I must follow him.

SCENE XI.

ZOPIR, PHANOR.

PHANOR.

This letter, sir, was by an Arab given
In secret to me.

ZOPIR.

From Hercides! gods,
What do I read? will heaven in tenderest pity
At length repay me for a life of sorrows?
Hercides begs to see me—he who snatched
From this fond bosom my two helpless children;
They yet are living, so this paper tells me,
Slaves to the tyrant—Seid and Palmira
Are orphans both, and know not whence they sprang,
Perhaps my children—O delusive hope,
Why wilt thou flatter me? it cannot be;
Fain would I credit thee, thou sweet deceiver:
I fly to meet and to embrace my children;
Yes; I will see Hercides: let him come
At midnight to me, to this holy altar,
Where I so often have invoked the gods,
At last, perhaps, propitious to my vows:
O ye immortal powers, restore my children,
Give back to virtue's paths two generous hearts
Corrupted by an impious, vile usurper!
If Seid and Palmira are not mine,
If such is my hard fate, I will adopt
The noble pair, and be their father still.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

MAHOMET, OMAR.

OMAR.

My lord, our secret is discovered; Seid
Has told Hercides; we are on the verge
Of ruin, yet I know he will obey.

MAHOMET.

Revealed it, sayest thou?

OMAR.

Yes: Hercides loves him
With tenderness.

MAHOMET.

Indeed! What said he to it?

OMAR.

He stood aghast, and seemed to pity Zopir.

MAHOMET.

He's weak, and therefore not to be entrusted;
Fools ever will be traitors; but no matter,
Let him take heed; a method may be found
To rid us of such dangerous witnesses:
Say, Omar, have my orders been obeyed?

OMAR.

They have, my lord.

MAHOMET.

'Tis well: remember, Omar,
In one important hour or Mahomet
Or Zopir is no more; if Zopir dies,

The credulous people will adore that God
Who thus declared for me, and saved his prophet:
Be this our first great object; that once done,
Take care of Seid; art thou sure the poison
Will do its office?

OMAR.

Fear it not, my lord.

MAHOMET.

O we must work in secret, the dark shades
Of death must hide our purpose—while we shed
Old Zopir's blood, be sure you keep Palmira
In deepest ignorance; she must not know
The secret of her birth: her bliss and mine
Depend upon it; well thou knowest, my triumphs
From error's fruitful source incessant flow:
The ties of blood, and all their boasted power
Are mere delusions: what are nature's bonds?
Nothing but habit, the mere force of custom:
Palmira knows no duty but obedience
To me; I am her lord, her king, her father,
Perhaps may add the name of husband to them:
Her little heart will beat with proud ambition
To captivate her master—but the hour
Approaches that must rid me of my foe,
The hated Zopir: Seid is prepared—
And see, he comes: let us retire.

OMAR.

Observe
His wild demeanor; rage and fierce resentment
Possess his soul.

SCENE II.

MAHOMET, OMAR, *retired to one side of the stage;* SEID *at the farther end.*

SEID.

This dreadful duty then
Must be fulfilled.

MAHOMET.

[*To Omar.*

Let us begone, in search
Of other means to make our power secure.

[*Exit with Omar.*

SEID.

[*Alone.*

I could not answer: one reproachful word
From Mahomet sufficed: I stood abashed,
But not convinced: if heaven requires it of me,
I must obey; but it will cost me dear.

SCENE III.

SEID, PALMIRA.

SEID.

Palmira, art thou here? what fatal cause
Hath led thee to this seat of horror?

PALMIRA.

Fear
And love directed me to find thee, Seid,

To ask thee what dread sacrifice thou meanest
To offer here; do heaven and Mahomet
Demand it of thee, must it be? O speak.

SEID.

Palmira, thou commandest my every thought
And every action; all depend on thee:
Direct them as thou wilt, inform my soul,
And guide my hand: be thou my guardian god,
Explain the will of heaven which yet I know not;
Why am I chosen to be its instrument
Of vengeance? are the prophet's dread commands
Irrevocable?

PALMIRA.

Seid, we must yield in silence,
Nor dare to question his decrees; he hears
Our secret sighs, nor are our sorrows hid
From Mahomet's all-seeing eye: to doubt
Is profanation of the deity.
His God is God alone; he could not else
Be thus victorious, thus invincible.

SEID.

He must be Seid's God who is Palmira's:
Yet cannot my astonished soul conceive
A being, tender, merciful, and kind,
Commanding murder; then again I think
To doubt is guilt: the priest without remorse
Destroys the victim: by the voice of heaven
I know that Zopir was condemned, I know
That Seid was predestined to support
The law divine: so Mahomet ordained,
And I obey him; fired with holy zeal
I go to slay the enemy of God;
And yet methinks another deity

Draws back my arm, and bids me spare the victim:
Religion lost her power when I beheld
The wretched Zopir; duty urged in vain
Her cruel plea, exhorting me to murder;
With joy I listened to the plaintive voice
Of soft humanity: but Mahomet—
How awful! how majestic! who can bear
His wrath? his frowns reproached my shameful weakness;
Religion is a dreadful power: alas!
Palmira, I am lost in doubts and fears,
Discordant passions tear this feeble heart:
I must be impious, must desert my faith,
Or be a murderer: Seid was not formed
For an assassin; but 'tis heaven's command,
And I have promised to avenge its cause:
The tears of grief and rage united flow,
Contending duties raise a storm within,
And thou alone, Palmira, must appease it;
Fix my uncertain heart, and give it peace:
Alas! without this dreadful sacrifice,
The tie that binds us is forever broke;
This only can secure thee.

PALMIRA.

Am I then
The price of blood, of Zopir's blood?

SEID.

So heaven
And Mahomet decree.

PALMIRA.

Love ne'er was meant
To make us cruel, barbarous, and inhuman.

SEID.

To Zopir's murderer, and to him alone,
Palmira must be given.

PALMIRA.

O hard condition!

SEID.

But 'tis the will of Mahomet and heaven.

PALMIRA.

Alas!

SEID.

Thou knowest the dreadful curse that waits
On disobedience—everlasting pain.

PALMIRA.

If thou must be the instrument of vengeance,
If at thy hands the blood which thou hast promised
Shall be required—

SEID.

What's to be done?

PALMIRA.

I tremble
To think of it—yet—

SEID.

It must be so then: thou
Hast fixed his doom; Palmira has consented.

PALMIRA.

Did I consent?

SEID.

Thou didst.

PALMIRA.

Detested thought!
What have I said?

SEID.

By thee the voice of heaven
Speaks its last dread command, and I obey:
Yon fatal altar is the chosen seat
Of Zopir's worship, there he bends the knee
To his false gods; retire, my sweet Palmira.

PALMIRA.

I cannot leave thee.

SEID.

Thou must not be witness
To such a deed of horror: these, Palmira,
Are dreadful moments: fly to yonder grove,
Thou wilt be near the prophet there: away.

PALMIRA.

Zopir must die then?

SEID.

Yes: this fatal hand
Must drag him to the earth, there murder him,
And bathe yon ruined altar in his blood.

PALMIRA.

Die by thy hand! I shudder at the thought:
But see! he comes; just heaven!

[*The farther part of the stage opens, and discovers an altar.*

SCENE IV.

SEID, PALMIRA, *on one side;* ZOPIR, *standing near the altar.*

ZOPIR.

Ye guardian gods
Of Mecca, threatened by an impious sect
Of vile impostors, now assert your power,

And let your Zopir's prayers, perhaps the last
He e'er shall make, be heard! the feeble bonds
Of our short peace are broken, and fierce war
Vindictive rages; O if ye support
The cause of this usurper—

SEID.

[*Aside to Palmira.*
Hear, Palmira,
How he blasphemes!

ZOPIR.

May death be Zopir's lot!
I wish for naught on earth but to behold,
In my last hour, and to embrace my children,
To die in their loved arms, if yet they live,
If they are here, for something whispers me
That I shall see them still.

PALMIRA.

[*Aside to Seid.*
His children, said he?

ZOPIR.

O I should die with pleasure at the sight:
Watch over and protect them, ye kind gods,
O let them think like me, but not like me
Be wretched!

SEID.

See! he prays to his false gods:
This is the time to end him.
[*Draws his sword.*

PALMIRA.

Do not, Seid.

SEID.

To serve my God, to please and merit thee,
This sword, devoted to the cause of heaven,

Is drawn, and shall destroy its deadliest foe:
Yon dreary walk invites me to the deed,
Methinks the path is bloody, wandering ghosts
Glide through the shade, and beckon me away.

PALMIRA.

What sayest thou, Seid?

SEID.

Ministers of death,
I follow you; conduct me to the altar,
And guide my trembling hand!

PALMIRA.

It must not be;
'Tis horrible: O stop, my Seid.

SEID.

No:
The hour is come, and see! the altar shakes.

PALMIRA.

'Tis heaven's assent, and we must doubt no more.

SEID.

Means it to urge me on, or to restrain?
Our prophet will reproach me for this weakness:
Palmira!

PALMIRA.

Well!

SEID.

Address thyself to heaven;
I go to do the deed.

[*He goes behind the altar where Zopir is retired.*

PALMIRA.

[*Alone.*

O dreadful moment!
What do I feel within! my blood runs cold:

And yet if heaven demands the sacrifice,
Am I to judge, to ask, or to complain?
Where is the heart that knows itself, that knows
Its innocence or guilt? We must obey:
But hark! methought I heard the plaintive voice
Of death; the deed is done—alas! my Seid.

SEID.

[*Returns looking wildly around.*

What voice was that? where am I? where's Palmira?
I cannot see Palmira; O she's gone,
She's lost forever.

PALMIRA.

Art thou blind to her
Who only lives for thee?

SEID.

Where are we?

PALMIRA.

Speak,
My Seid, is the dreadful sacrifice
Performed, and thy sad promise all fulfilled?

SEID.

What sayest thou?

PALMIRA.

Zopir? is he dead?

SEID.

Who? Zopir?

PALMIRA.

Good heaven, preserve his senses!—come, my Seid,
Let us be gone.

SEID.

How will these tottering limbs
Support me!—I recover—is it you,
Palmira?

PALMIRA.

Yes: what hast thou done?

SEID.

Obeyed
The voice of heaven, seized with this desperate hand
His silver hairs, and dragged him to the earth:
'Twas thy command: O God! thou couldst not bid me
Commit a crime! trembling and pale a while
I stood aghast, then drew this sacred sword,
And plunged it in his bosom: what a look
Of tenderness and love the poor old man
Cast on his murderer! a scene so mournful
Ne'er did these eyes behold: my heart retains
And will forever keep the sad idea:
Would I were dead like him!

PALMIRA.

Let us repair
To Mahomet, the prophet will protect us;
Here you're in danger; follow me.

SEID.

I cannot:
Palmira, pity me.

PALMIRA.

What mournful thought
Can thus depress thee?

SEID.

O if thou hadst seen
His tender looks, when from his bleeding side
He drew the fatal weapon forth, and cried:
"Dear Seid, poor unhappy Seid!" Oh,
That voice, those looks, and Zopir at my feet
Weltering in blood, are still before my eyes:
What have we done?

PALMIRA.

I tremble for thy life:
O in the name of all the sacred ties
That bind us, fly, and save thyself.

SEID.

Away,
And leave me: why did thy ill-fated love
Command this dreadful sacrifice, Palmira?
Without thy cruel order heaven itself
Had never been obeyed.

PALMIRA.

Unkind reproach!
Couldst thou but know what thy Palmira suffers
How wouldst thou pity her!

SEID.

What dreadful object
Is that before us?

[*Zopir rises up slowly from behind the altar, and leans upon it.*

PALMIRA.

'Tis the murdered Zopir;
Bloody and pale he drags his mangled limbs
Towards us.

SEID.

Wilt thou go to him?

PALMIRA.

I must;
For pity and remorse distract my soul,
And draw me to him.

ZOPIR.

[*Comes forward leaning on Palmira.*
Gentle maid, support me!
[*He sits down.*
Ungrateful Seid, thou hast slain me; now
Thou weepest; alas! too late.

SCENE V.

ZOPIR, SEID, PALMIRA, PHANOR.

PHANOR.

O dreadful sight!
What's here?

ZOPIR.

I wish I could have seen my friend
Hercides—Phanor, art thou there?—behold
My murderer.
[*Points to Seid.*

PHANOR.

O guilt! accursed deed!
Unhappy Seid, look upon—thy father.

SEID.

Who?

PALMIRA.

He?

SEID.

My father?

ZOPIR.

Gracious heaven!

PHANOR.

Hercides
In his last moments took me in his arms,
And weeping cried: "If there be time, O haste
Prevent a parricide, and stop the arm
Of Seid;" in my breast the tyrant lodged
The dreadful secret; now I suffer for it,
And die by Mahomet's detested hand:
Haste, Phanor, fly, inform the hapless Zopir,
That Seid and Palmira are—his children.

SEID.

Palmira!

PALMIRA.

Thou my brother?

ZOPIR.

O ye gods!
O nature, thou hast not deceived me then,
When thou didst plead for them! unhappy Seid,
What could have urged thee to so foul a deed?

SEID.

[*Kneeling.*
My gratitude, my duty, my religion,
All that mankind hold sacred, urged me on
To do the worst of actions:—give me back
That fatal weapon.

PALMIRA.

[*Laying hold of Seid's arm.*

Plunge it in my breast;
I was the cause of my dear father's murder;
And incest is the price of parricide:

SEID.

Strike both: heaven hath not punishment enough
For crimes like ours.

ZOPIR.

[*Embracing them.*

Let me embrace my children:
The gods have poured into my cup of sorrow
A draught of sweetest happiness: I die,
Contented, and resign me to my fate:
But you must live, my children; you, my Seid,
And you, Palmira, by the sacred name
Of nature, by thy dying father's blood,
Fast flowing from the wound which thou hast made,
Let me entreat you, live; revenge yourselves,
Avenge the injured Zopir, but preserve
Your gracious lives; the great, the important hour
Approaches, that must change the mournful scene:
The offended people, ere to-morrow's dawn,
Will rise in arms and punish the usurper;
My blood will add fresh fuel to their rage;
Let us await the issue.

SEID.

O I fly
To sacrifice the monster, to take vengeance
For a dear father's life, or lose my own.

SCENE VI.

ZOPIR, SEID, PALMIRA, OMAR, *Attendants.*

OMAR.

Guards, seize the murderer; Mahomet is come
To punish guilt, and execute the laws.

ZOPIR.

What do I hear?

SEID.

Did Mahomet command thee
To punish Seid?

PALMIRA.

Execrable tyrant!
Was not the murder done by thy command?

OMAR.

'Twas not commanded.

SEID.

Well have I deserved
This just reward of my credulity.

OMAR.

Soldiers, obey.

PALMIRA.

O stop, ye shall not——

OMAR.

Madam,
If Seid's life is dear to you, submit
With patience, lest the prophet's anger fall
Like thunder on your head; if you obey,
Great Mahomet is able to protect you;
Guards, lead her to the king.

PALMIRA.

O take me, death,
From this sad scene of never-ending woe!

[*Seid and Palmira are carried off.*

ZOPIR.

[*To Phanor.*

They're gone, they're lost: O most unhappy father,
The wound which Seid gave is not so deep,
So painful as this parting.

PHANOR.

See, my lord,
The day appears, and the armed multitudes
Press onward to defend the cause of Zopir.

ZOPIR.

Support me, Phanor: yet thy friend may live
To punish this vile hypocrite; at least
In death may serve my dear—my cruel—children.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

MAHOMET, OMAR, *Guards at a distance.*

OMAR.

Zopir's approaching death alarms the people,
We have endeavored to appease their clamors,
And disavowed all knowledge of the deed;
To some, we called it the avenging hand
Of heaven that favors thus its prophet's cause:
With others, we lament his fall, and boast
Thy awful justice that will soon avenge it.

The crowd attentive listen to thy praise,
And all the danger of the storm is o'er;
If aught remains of busy faction's rage
It is but as the tossing of the waves
After the tempest, when the vault of heaven
Is placid and serene.

MAHOMET.

Be it our care
To keep it so: where are my valiant bands?

OMAR.

All ready; Osman in the dead of night
By secret paths conducted them to Mecca.

MAHOMET.

'Tis strange that men must either be deceived
Or forced into obedience: Seid knows not
It is a father's blood that he has shed?

OMAR.

Who could inform him of it? he alone
Who knew the secret is no more; Hercides
Is gone, and Seid soon shall follow him;
For know, he has already drunk the poison;
His crime was punished ere it was committed:
Even whilst he dragged his father to the altar
Death lurked within his veins; he cannot live:
Palmira, too, is safe; she may be useful:
I've given her hopes of Seid's pardon: that
May win her to our cause; she dare not murmur,
Besides, her heart is flexible and soft,
Formed to obey, to worship Mahomet,
And make him soon the happiest of mankind:
Trembling and pale, behold! they bring her to thee.

MAHOMET.

Collect my forces, Omar, and return.

SCENE II.

MAHOMET, PALMIRA, *Guards.*

PALMIRA.

O heaven! where am I? gracious God!

MAHOMET.

Palmira,
Be not alarmed; already I have fixed
Thy fate and Mecca's: know, the great event
That fills thy soul with horror is a mystery
'Twixt heaven and me that's not to be revealed:
But thou art free, and happy: think no more
Of Seid, nor lament him; leave to me
The fate of men; be thankful for thy own:
Thou knowest that Mahomet hath loved thee long,
That I have ever been a father to thee;
Perhaps a nobler fate, and fairer title
May grace thee still, if thou deservest it; therefore
Blot from thy memory the name of Seid,
And let thy soul aspire to greater blessings
Than it could dare to hope for; let thy heart
Be my last noblest victory, and join
The conquered world to own me for its master.

PALMIRA.

What joys, what blessings, or what happiness
Can I expect from thee, thou vile impostor?
Thou bloody savage! This alone was wanting,
This cruel insult to complete my woes:

Eternal Father, look upon this king,
This holy prophet, this all-powerful god
Whom I adored: thou monster, to betray
Two guiltless hearts into the crying sin
Of parricide; thou infamous seducer
Of my unguarded youth, how darest thou think,
Stained as thou art with my dear father's blood,
To gain Palmira's heart? but know, proud tyrant,
Thou art not yet invincible: the veil
Is off that hid thee, and the hand of vengeance
Upraised to scourge thy guilt: dost thou not hear
The maddening multitude already armed
In the defence of injured innocence?
From death's dark shades my murdered father comes
To lead them on: O that these feeble hands
Could tear thee piece-meal, thee and all thy train!
Would I could see them weltering in their blood;
See Mecca, and Medina, Asia, all
Combined against thee! that the credulous world
Would shake off thy vile chains, and thy religion
Become the jest and scorn of all mankind
To after ages! may that hell, whose threats
Thou hast so often denounced 'gainst all who dared
To doubt thy false divinity, now open
Her fiery gates, and be thy just reward!
These are the thanks I owe thee for thy bounties,
And these the prayers I made for Mahomet.

MAHOMET.

I see I am betrayed; but be it so:
Whoe'er thou art, learn henceforth to obey;
For know, my heart——

SCENE III.

MAHOMET, PALMIRA, OMAR, ALI, *Attendants.*

OMAR.

The secret is revealed;
Hercides told it in his dying moments:
The people all enraged have forced the prison:
They're up in arms, and bearing on their shoulders
The bloody corpse of their unhappy chief,
Lament his fate, and cry aloud for vengeance:
All is confusion: Seid at their head
Excites them to rebellion, and cries out,
"I am a parricide;" with rage and grief
He seems distracted; with one voice the crowd
Unite to curse the prophet and his God:
Even those who promised to admit our forces
Within the walls of Mecca, have conspired
With them to raise their desperate arms against thee;
And naught is heard but cries of death and vengeance.

PALMIRA.

Just heaven pursue him, and defend the cause
Of innocence!

MAHOMET.

[*To Omar.*
Well, what have we to fear?

OMAR.

Omar, my lord, with your few faithful friends,
Despising danger, are prepared to brave
The furious storm, and perish at your feet.

MAHOMET.

Alone I will defend you all; come near:
Behold, and say I act like Mahomet.

SCENE IV.

MAHOMET, OMAR, *and his Party one side,* SEID, *and the People on the other.* PALMIRA *in the middle.*

SEID.

Avenge my father, seize the traitor.

MAHOMET.

People,
Born to obey me, listen to your master.

SEID.

Hear not the monster; follow me:
[*He comes forward a little, and then staggers.*
O heaven!
What sudden darkness spreads o'er my dim eyes?
Now strike, my friends—O I am dying.

MAHOMET.

Ha!
Then all is well.

PALMIRA.

My brother, canst thou shed
No blood but Zopir's?

SEID.

Yes: come on—I cannot;
Some god unnerves me.
[*He faints.*

MAHOMET.

Hence let every foe
Of Mahomet be taught to fear and tremble:
Know, ye proud infidels, this hand alone
Hath power to crush you all, to me the God
Of nature delegates his sovereign power:
Acknowledge then his prophet, and his laws,
'Twixt Mahomet and Seid let that God
Decide the contest, which of us forever
Is guilty, now, this moment let him perish!

PALMIRA.

My brother—Seid—can this monster boast
Such power? the people stand astonished at him,
And tremble at his voice; and wilt thou yield
To Mahomet?

SEID.

[*Supported by his attendants.*

Alas! the hand of heaven
Is on me, and the involuntary crime
Is too severely punished: O Palmira,
In vain was Seid virtuous: O if heaven
Chastises thus our errors, what must crimes
Like thine expect, detested Mahomet?
What cause hast thou to tremble—O I die;
Receive me, gracious heaven, and spare Palmira.

[*Dies.*

PALMIRA.

'Tis not, ye people, 'tis not angry heaven
Pursues my Seid. No: he's poisoned—

MAHOMET.

[*Interrupting her, and addressing himself to the people.*

Learn
From Seid's fate, ye unbelievers, how

To reverence Mahomet whom heaven defends;
Nature and death, ye see, have heard my voice,
And this pale corpse hath witnessed their obedience;
The sword of fate hangs o'er your heads, beware
It fall not on you: thus will I reward
All impious rebels, all vile infidels,
And punish every word and thought against me.
If I withhold my rage, and let you live,
Remember, traitors, that you owe your beings
To my indulgence; hasten to the temple,
Prostrate yourselves before the throne of grace,
And deprecate the wrath of Mahomet.

[*The people retire.*

PALMIRA.

O stay, and hear me, people—the barbarian
Poisoned my brother—monster, raised by crimes
To empire thus, and deified by guilt,
Thou murderer of Palmira's hapless race,
Complete thy work, and take my wretched life:
O my dear brother, let me follow thee!

[*She seizes her brother's sword and stabs herself.*

MAHOMET.

Seize, and prevent her—

PALMIRA.

'Tis too late; I die:
And dying hope a God more just than thine
Has yet in store a state of happiness
For injured innocence: let Mahomet
Reign here in peace: this world was made for tyrants. [*Dies.*

MAHOMET.

She's gone; she's lost; the only dear reward
I wished to keep of all my crimes: in vain

I fought, and conquered; Mahomet is wretched
Without Palmira: Conscience, now I feel thee,
And feel that thou canst rive the guilty heart.
O thou eternal God, whom I have made
The instrument of ill, whom I have wronged,
Braved, and blasphemed; O thou whom yet I fear,
Behold me self-condemned, behold me wretched,
Even whilst the world adores me: vain was all
My boasted power: I have deceived mankind;
But how shall I impose on my own heart?
A murdered father, and two guiltless children
Must be avenged: come, ye unhappy victims,
And end me quickly!—Omar, we must strive
To hide this shameful weakness, save my glory,
And let me reign o'er a deluded world:
For Mahomet depends on fraud alone,
And to be worshipped never must be known.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

AMELIA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The Duke of Foix.
Amelia.
Vamir, Brother to the Duke of Foix.
Lisois.
Thais, Confidante of Amelia.
Emar, Friend of Vamir.

SCENE, the Palace of the Duke of Foix.

This tragedy is founded on historical truth. A duke of Brittany, in the year 1387, commanded the lord of Bavalan to assassinate the constable of Clisson: Bavalan, the day after, told the duke it was done: the duke becoming sensible of the horror of his crime, and apprehensive of the fatal consequences of it, abandoned himself to the most violent despair: Bavalan, after giving him time to repent, at length told him that he had loved him well enough to disobey his orders, etc.

The action is transported to another age and country for particular reasons.

AMELIA.

ACT I. SCENE I.

AMELIA, LISOIS.

LISOIS.

Permit a soldier, in this seat of war,
To steal a moment from the battle's rage,
And greet the fair Amelia; to the king
Thy noble heart is bound, I know, by ties
Of dearest friendship; long and faithfully
Hath Lisois served the valiant duke of Foix
Who holds thee here a prisoner: well I know
The violence of his passion for Amelia,
Foresee the dreadful consequence, and come,
With all the warmth of friendship, to advise
And to consult, to lay my heart before thee
Perhaps 'tis not unworthy of thy notice.

AMELIA.

The seal of truth is ever on thy lips,
I know thy firm integrity; whate'er
Thou sayest, I shall believe.

LISOIS.

Know then, though long
I've served the duke with most unwearied zeal,
Through years of peril, and unnumbered toils,
Yet could I ne'er approve the fatal league
That bound him to the Moor, and took from France
The noblest of her princes; in these days

Of public discord, I have ranged myself
Beneath no banners but what honor raised,
And followed but the dictates of my heart:
Not that, the slave of prejudice, my soul
Is blind to all the errors of a friend;
With grief I see the duke's impatient warmth,
The impetuous ardor of his boiling youth,
I cannot shut my eyes against his follies:
Ofttimes the torrent which I strive to stop
Mocks my weak power, and throws down all
before it;
But he has virtues that will recompense
His worst of faults: if we must follow none
But perfect princes, whose unbiassed hearts
Are free from every vice, and every weakness,
Whom shall we serve? I love the duke; and yet
'Tis with regret I draw the hostile sword
'Gainst France: I wish he could be reconciled.

AMELIA.

If that could e'er be done, thy influence best
Might reunite them: if he loves his glory,
Sure this misguided prince will listen to thee.
How fatal has his error been!

LISOIS.

In vain
I've tried to bend his haughty spirit; oft
Have I with harsh unwelcome truths attacked him,
And sorely pierced his heart: but thou alone
Canst bring him to his duty, and his king:
That was my errand here: there was a time
When on the fair Amelia I had placed
My hopes of bliss; without abasement then
I thought you might have listened to my vows;
But heaven reserved thee for a nobler fate.

Whilst I was absent, by the cruel Moors
Thou wert enslaved; the happy conqueror came,
The gallant Foix, and saved thee from their rage;
His was the glory, his be the reward:
His claims are strong, his youth, his rank, and power,
His fame, and services, all plead for him;
Amelia's justice and her gratitude
Must bind her to him: I have no pretence,
And therefore I am silent; but if merit
Could make thee mine, I would dispute the prize
Even with the sons of kings, nor yield Amelia
To any but to him: he is my master,
My leader, and my friend; he loves me well:
I am not a half proud, half virtuous lover,
But what I still would litigate with power,
I give to friendship; nay, I can do more,
I can subdue the weakness of my heart,
And plead a rival's cause; point out the path
Of glory to thee, show thee what is due
To that illustrious hero who preserved thee,
By whom thou livest: I can behold unmoved,
And with unenvying eye, thy charms bestowed
On him who best deserves them: take my heart
Between you, and accept my honest service,
This arm shall fight for both; I sacrifice
My passions to your interest: friendship bids me,
And I obey; my country too commands:
Remember, if the prince is yours, he soon
Will be the king's.

AMELIA.

Thy virtues, noble youth,
Astonish me; thou givest the admiring world
A rare example; canst thou be sincere?
And sure thou art so, thus to conquer love,

And give up all to friendship! all who know
Must wonder at thee: thou hast served thy master,
And canst not be an enemy to mine:
A heart so generous sure must think with me:
'Tis not in souls like thine to hate their king.
Shall I then ask one favor at thy hands?

LISOIS.

Amelia's orders shall be ever sacred:
Command, and I obey.

AMELIA.

Thy generous counsel
Hath urged me to accept a noble rank
I looked not for, and offered by a prince:
The choice, I own, does honor to Amelia,
When I reflect, that, long before he told
His love, he saved my liberty and life;
Foe to his sovereign, though the rebel Moor
Hath drawn him from his duty and allegiance,
Yet he has poured so many favors on me,
I cannot bear to hurt him, though, in spite
Of all his goodness, and my gratitude,
I must refuse him: his unhappy passion
Afflicts me; 'tis distressful to my heart,
For all his kindness thus to make him wretched.
Fain would I spare myself the ungrateful task
Of saying that I must not hear his vows:
It is not for my feeble voice to tell
A prince his duty; 'twere a dangerous power,
And I am far from wishing to enjoy it;
Who can direct him better than thyself?
Alas! my lord, 'tis not a time for love;
The royal army at our gates, and naught
But war and slaughter all around us: blood
On every side! himself against my master,

Against his brother, now in arms; all these
Are powerful reasons: O my lord, in you
Is all my hope; forgive me; O complete
The generous work, restore me to my king;
Let him do that, 'tis all I ask; but add
This effort more to what thou'st done already:
Thou hast the strongest influence o'er his heart,
A firm and manly soul, a friend like thee,
Respected and beloved, will make the voice
Of duty heard, his counsels will be laws.

LISOIS.

Alas! those counsels will have little weight
Against the passions that possess his soul;
His fiery temper gives me too much cause
To fear him: he's inclined to jealousy,
And if he hears I had a thought of thee,
'Twill drive his soul to madness, and perhaps
Undo us all: he must be soothed by art;
Leave him to me, and try to reconcile
Your jarring interests; weigh his offers well.
Henceforth I'll think no more of love and thee,
But get me to the field, the soldier's duty
Shall there engross me: if thou lovest thy country,
If France be dear to thee, restore her hero,
And she will bless thee for the deed: farewell.

SCENE II.

AMELIA, THAIS.

AMELIA.

Restore him, said he? what! at the dear price
Of all my happiness! it cannot be;
'Twere infamous and base, the worst of crimes.

THAIS.

But wherefore is the prince thus hateful to you?
Why in these days of discord, war, and tumult,
Whilst faction reigns, and of our royal race
Brother 'gainst brother arms, and every hour
Brings new afflictions, wherefore should Amelia,
Whose gentler stars for other purposes
Had formed her soul, to love and to be loved,
Why should Amelia, with such sentiments
Of scorn and hatred, meet a hero's vows
Who had avenged her cause? The prince, thou knowest,
Amongst his ancestors can boast the blood
Of our first kings, and is himself a lord
Of rich domains, and wide-extended power.
He loves you, offers you his hand: can rank
And title, objects that are envied still
By all mankind, pursued with eagerness,
And gained with rapture, can these only fill
Thy heart with sorrow, and thy eyes with tears?

AMELIA.

Because he saved me once, has he a right
Now to oppress me? Must Amelia fall
A victim to his fatal aid? I know
I'm much indebted to him, would I were not!

THAIS.

Nay, that's ungrateful.

AMELIA.

Thou shalt know my heart,
My miseries, my duty, and my fate:
I will no longer keep the secret from thee,
'Twere cruel to distrust thee; when thou knowest
My story, thou mayst justify thy friend.

I must not listen to the prince's vows,
For know, my heart is given to his brother.

THAIS.

Ha! to the noble Vamir!

AMELIA.

Yes, my friend:
With mutual oaths we sealed our mutual faith,
And at Leucate I expected him,
There to confirm it at the holy altar,
When by the cruel Moors that rushed upon us
I was surprised, and made a captive; then
The prince, to these unconquered savages
In firm alliance bound, appeared, and saved me;
There's my distress: the life another saved
Must be devoted to the faithful Vamir.

THAIS.

But why then thus conceal thy passion? why
Nourish a hopeless flame thou shouldst extinguish?
He would respect this sacred tie, and check
His fruitless passion.

AMELIA.

O I must not tell him:
The brothers, to complete my sorrows, armed
Against each other, have taken different parties
In this destructive war; the faithful Vamir
Fights for his king. Thou knowest the violence
Of his proud rival: all I can oppose
To his fierce rage is melancholy silence;
Even yet he knows not that in happier times
The gallant Vamir had engaged my heart:
To tell it him would fire his jealous soul,
And only make Amelia more unhappy.

'Tis time to quit this fatal place, the king
With pleasure will receive me: let us hence.
The prisoners, Thais, from these walls even now
Are breaking forth, and meditate their flight:
They will conduct us: I defy all danger,
Will hazard all for freedom and repose.

THAIS.

Behold the duke.

AMELIA.

I cannot speak to him,
The starting tear would soon betray me: what
Would I not give forever to avoid him!

SCENE III.

DUKE OF FOIX, LISOIS, THAIS.

DUKE.

[*To Thais.*

Avoid me! fly me! Thais, stay: thou knowest
My sorrows, knowest I love her to distraction;
My life depends on her: but let her not
Abuse her power, and drive me to despair:
I hate her cold respect, her poor return
Of gratitude to all my warmth of passion:
Delay is cruel, 'tis the worst refusal;
'Tis an affront my heart will ne'er forgive:
In vain she boasts to me her loyal zeal,
Her fond attachment to her royal master,
'Tis time that all should yield to love and me:
Here let her find her country and her king;
To me she owes her honor, and her life;
And I owe all to her, I owe my love:

United as we are by every claim,
We must not part, the altar is prepared,
She shall be mine; go, tell her all is ready.

SCENE IV.

THE DUKE, LISOIS.

LISOIS.

My lord, remember that our kingdom's safety
Depends on this decisive day.

DUKE.

I know it
And am resolved to conquer or to die
Amelia's husband.

LISOIS.

But the foe advances,
And soon will be upon us.

DUKE.

Let him come,
I mean to fight him; thinkest thou I'm a coward?
Thinkest thou the tyrant love shall e'er extinguish
My noble thirst of glory? though she hates,
She shall admire me still: she boasts indeed
Her sovereign empire o'er my captive heart,
But shall not blast my virtue and my fame.
No: thy reproaches are unjust; my friend
Was too severe; condemn me not unjustly,
Love ne'er unnerves the gallant sons of France:
Even from the bosom of success and joy,
Fearless they fly to arms, and rush on death:
And I too will die worthy of Amelia.

LISOIS.

Say rather, worthy of thyself: I think
To-day of nothing but the public welfare;
I talk of battles, and thou speakest of love.
My lord, I've seen the army of the foe:
Vamir, so fame reports, is armed against us:
From us, I know, he hath long since withdrawn
His valiant troops. I know him not, but hear
He's of a noble nature: if his soul,
Inspired by duty, and by glory warmed,
Still feels the tender tie that linked your hearts
In earlier years, he may assist us now,
And be the means of making wished-for peace.
My cares———

DUKE.

Away: I would not be obliged
Thus to a brother: shall I sue for peace,
And ask forgiveness? yet it hurts my soul
To think that Vamir is my foe: I still
Remember our past friendship, and the love
I bore him once; but since he will oppose me,
Since he's no longer ours, why let him go,
And serve his king.

LISOIS.

Thy fiery temper braves
Too far the patience of an easy monarch.

DUKE.

A monarch! the mere phantom of a king,
Unworthy of his race, a royal slave,
In golden chains, and seated on a throne
Subjected to a petty officer:
I'm not afraid of Pepin, their arch-tyrant;
I hate a subject that would frighten me,

And I despise a king who can't command:
If he permits a rebel to usurp
The sovereign power, I'll still support my own:
This heart's too proud to bend beneath the laws
Of these new upstarts who oppress their king:
Clovis, my royal ancestor, ne'er taught
His sons to cringe beneath a haughty master.
At least these faithful Arabs will avenge me;
If I must feel a tyrant, let him be
A stranger.

LISOIS.

You detest these governors,
But they have saved our empire, which your friends,
The Arabs, but for them had overthrown:
I tremble at this new alliance: Spain
Before you stands a terrible example:
These savage plunderers, these new tyrants dig
Our graves with our own hands. 'Twere better far
To yield with prudence.

DUKE.

What, fall down and sue
For mercy!

LISOIS.

Your true interest long forgotten———

DUKE.

Revenge is my first interest.

LISOIS.

Love and anger
Too long have ruled the bosom of my friend.

DUKE.

I know they have, but cannot conquer nature.

LISOIS.

You may, you ought; nay, I'll not flatter you,
But even though I condemn, I'll follow thee;
'Tis a friend's duty to point out the faults
Of him he loves; to counsel, to exhort,
To save him from the dangerous precipice:
This I have done for thee, but thou wilt fall,
And I must perish with thee.

DUKE.

O my friend,
What hast thou said?

LISOIS.

But what I ought to say:
And would to heaven that thou hadst listened to me!
What dost thou purpose?

DUKE.

When my ardent hopes
Shall be fulfilled, when the ungrateful maid
Shall give sweet peace to my distracted mind,
Then will I hear the counsels of my friend.
What can I purpose now, or what design,
Till I have seen the tyrant who must guide
My future fate? let her determine for me,
Let her save me, and I will save my country.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

THE DUKE OF FOIX. [*Alone.*

She cannot sure again refuse to see me,
And urge me to despair! she dare not do it:

Fool that I am to give her thus the power;
How weak is my proud heart to yield itself
A voluntary slave! go, throw thyself,
Mean as thou art, beneath the tyrant's feet;
Go, make thy life dependent on a word,
A look, a smile, from proud Amelia; pass
From love to fury, and from tears to rage;
'Tis the last time I e'er will speak to her.
I go———

SCENE II.

THE DUKE, AMELIA AND THAIS *advancing from the upper end of the stage.*

AMELIA.

There's hope, my Thais; yet I tremble.
Would Vamir hazard this bold enterprise?
'Tis full of danger; ha! what do I see?
[*Advancing towards the Duke.*

DUKE.

Amelia, what hath this way led thy steps
I know not, but thy eyes too plainly tell me
That I was not the object of their search:
What! still turn from me, still insult the heart
That dotes upon thee! cruel tyrant, thus
To blast the laurels planted on my brow:
O if Amelia's hand had placed them there
They might have flourished, but she has forgot
Her plighted faith, and broke her flattering promise.

AMELIA.

Thou never hadst my faith, I never gave
Thee promise, gratitude is all I owe thee.

DUKE.

Did I not offer thee my hand?

AMELIA.

Thou didst:
It was an honor which I could not merit,
And which I never sought, but I received it
With due respect; you thought, no doubt, a rank
So glorious must have dazzled poor Amelia.
At length, my lord, 'tis time to undeceive you;
I do it with regret, because I know
It will offend you, but I must be plain:
In short, my lord, I love my king too well
To think of wedding with his foe: thy blood,
I know, is noble; mine is spotless yet,
Nor will be stained with foul disloyalty,
And I inherit from my ancestors
The fixed abhorrence of my country's foes:
Nor will I e'er acknowledge for a master
The friend of tyrants, be he e'er so great:
Such is my firm resolve; perhaps, my lord,
It may seem harsh, but you obliged me to it.

DUKE.

This is a language, madam, which I own
I looked not for; I never could have thought
That angry heaven, to make me doubly wretched,
Would choose Amelia for its instrument
Of vengeance: you have studied long in secret
The arts of black ingratitude, of scorn
And insult, and now open all your heart.
I was a stranger to this patriot zeal,
This most heroic ardor for thy country,
This fetch of policy; but tell me, madam,
Whom have you here but this insulted lover,
The injured Foix, to succor and support you?

Thou hast reproached me with my new alliance,
Those faithful friends on whom I here rely
For all my safety, and for all my power:
Without their aid thou hadst been still a captive;
To them you owed your liberty and life,
And am I thus rewarded?

AMELIA.

You prolonged
My wretched days; but are they therefore yours,
And may I not dispose them as I please?
Did you preserve me but to make me wretched,
To be a tyrant o'er the life you saved?

DUKE.

Ungrateful woman, thou deservest the name
Of tyrant most, for now I read thy soul,
See through the thin disguise, behold too plainly
My own dishonor, and thy treacherous falsehood:
I know thou lovest another, but whoe'er
He be that thus hath robbed me of thy heart,
Fear thou my love, and tremble at my rage;
For, if he be on earth, I'll find the traitor,
And tear him from thee: if amidst its horrors
My soul could feel one momentary joy,
'Twould be to make thee wretched.

AMELIA.

No: my lord,
Indeed it would not; reason will forbid it:
Thy soul's too noble to oppress with woe
A life which thou hadst saved; but if thy heart
Should ever stoop so low, thy virtues still,
Thy goodness in my memory shall live,
And only thy unkindness be forgotten.
I pity, and forgive thee; thou wilt blush

Hereafter at the thought of injuring me;
Spite of thy threats, my soul is yet unmoved,
Nor dreads thy anger, nor defies thy power.

DUKE.

Forgive the transports of a mind disturbed,
The rage of love embittered by despair;
Lisois, I find, holds secret conference with you,
Abets your falsehood, and defends your conduct;
Leans to the royal party, and combines
In vain with you to make a convert of me:
It seems I'm to be governed by your will,
And not my own: your converse is the same,
The same your purpose; but why use these arms
Against me? to persuade my easy heart,
Why must Amelia seek a stranger's aid?
A word will win me, if 'tis spoke by love.

AMELIA.

My heart, I own, hath opened to thy friend
Its hopes and fears, but he hath done much more
Than he had promised: pity then my tears,
Pity my sorrows, be thyself again;
Subdue a passion which Amelia must not,
Cannot return: accept my gratitude,
'Tis all I have to give thee.

DUKE.

Lisois, then,
And he alone, enjoys thy confidence,
Thy friendship, more perhaps; I see it now.

AMELIA.

You may perhaps hereafter, but at present
You have no right, sir, to control my thoughts,
My actions, or my words; no right to blame me,

Or to complain: I sought thy friend's assistance,
And he has given it me; I wish, my lord,
That you would learn to act and think like him.

SCENE III.

THE DUKE. [*Alone.*

'Tis well: this base, ungrateful, perjured woman,
Without a blush, confesses all her falsehood;
The mystery is unfolded now: one friend,
One only friend, I had, and he destroys me.
Friendship! vain phantom, unsubstantial shade,
So often sought for, and so seldom found,
Thou ever hadst some wholesome draught to pour
Into my cup of sorrow; but at last
Thou, too, like love, hast cruelly deceived me!
For the reward of all my errors past
I have but this, that no allurements now,
No flattering pleasures, henceforth shall betray me;
For from this hour I will be fond—of nothing.
But lo! the traitor comes with cruel hand
To tear my wounds, and make them bleed afresh.

SCENE IV.

THE DUKE, LISOIS.

LISOIS.

My lord, I come obedient to thy orders:
But why that frown, those eyes of discontent
That scowl upon me? has thy soul, long time
The sport of passion, weighed in reason's scale
Thy interest, and thy happiness?

DUKE.

It has.

LISOIS.

And what was the result?

DUKE.

My eyes are opened
To falsehood and deceit; I've learned to find
A rival and a traitor in my friend.

LISOIS.

How's that!

DUKE.

It is enough.

LISOIS.

Too much, my lord:
Who is the traitor?

DUKE.

Canst thou ask me who?
Who but thyself was privy to the wrongs
I have received, who else must answer for them?
I know, Amelia hath conversed with thee
Here, in the palace; when I mentioned thee
She trembled: this affected silence speaks
Your guilt more plainly, and I know not which
Most to abhor, Amelia, or—my friend.

LISOIS.

Canst thou yet listen to that friend?

DUKE.

I can.

LISOIS.

Thinkest thou I still am anxious for my fame?
Dost thou esteem, and canst thou yet believe me?

DUKE.

I will: for till this hour I thought thee virtuous,
And held thee for my friend.

LISOIS.

Those noble titles
Have hitherto conducted me through life;
But wherefore justify myself to thee?
Thou'st not deserved it: know, Amelia's charms
Long since had touched my heart, before thy hand
Had set her free, and saved her precious life,
But by the ties of gratitude she's thine;
Thou hast deserved her by thy services:
For me, I'm more the soldier than the soft
And tender lover; I despise the art
Of base seduction, fit for courts alone,
And flattery's smooth perfidiousness; my soul
Is made of firmer stuff: I talked indeed
Of marriage to her; and that sacred tie,
Knit by esteem and fair equality
Of fortune and condition, might have made her
More happy far than rank and titles could,
That stand upon a dangerous precipice:
But yesternight, you know, I visited
Your ramparts, when your jealous soul alarmed
Discovered all its passion; I observed it:
To-day I saw the object of your grief,
Your loved Amelia, and beheld her charms
With eyes of cold indifference: o'er myself
I gained an easy conquest: I did more,
Pleaded for thee, for an ungrateful friend,
And urged a passion which I can't approve;
Recalled the memory of thy bounties past,
Thy glory and thy rank, acknowledged faults
I knew you had, and numbered all your virtues;

All this against myself I did for thee;
For my friend's happiness gave up my own:
And if the sacrifice is still imperfect,
Show me the rival that still dares to oppose thee,
And I will stake my life to do thee justice.

DUKE.

My friend, thou soarest above me; I am fallen,
Abashed, confounded: who could see Amelia
And not adore her? but to conquer thus
Thy passion! O thou never couldst have loved her.

LISOIS.

I did: but love, like other passions, acts
With different force on different minds.

DUKE.

I love
Too well, my friend, and cannot imitate
The virtue I admire: my foolish heart——

LISOIS.

I ask not for thy praises, but thy love;
And if thou thinkest that I have merited
Aught at thy hands, O do but serve thyself,
Thy happiness is Lisois' best reward.
Thou seest with what determined hate thy brother
Pursues the Moor, I dread the consequence:
The people groan beneath this foreign yoke,
Soon, I foresee, the empire will unite
Their scattered powers, new enemies still rise
Against us, the pure blood of Clovis still
Is worshipped by the crowd, and soon or late
The branches of this sacred tree, that long
Have bent beneath the storm, again shall rise,
Spring with fresh verdure, and overshade the land.
Placed by thy rank and fortunes near the throne,

Long time thou wert thy king and country's friend;
But in the days of public discord, fate
Attached thee to another cause; perhaps
New interests now may call for new connections,
And what united may dissolve the tie;
The power of these despotic governors
May be restrained, and weakened by thy hand——

DUKE.

I wish it were so; thinkest thou then Amelia
Would listen to me? if I should embrace
The royal party, might she still be mine?

LISOIS.

I am a stranger to Amelia's heart;
But what are her designs, her views to thee?
Must love alone decide the nation's fate?
In Touraine's field, when gallant Clovis fought,
And, o'er the haughty conquerors of Rome
Victorious, stopped the bloody Arian's hand,
That dealt destruction round us, did he save
His country, thinkest thou, but to please a mistress?
This arm against a rival is prepared
To serve my friend, but I would serve him more,
Would cure him of this fond, destructive passion;
This love deceives us, we're too fearful of him;
We wound ourselves, and lay the blame on him;
The coward's tyrant, and the hero's slave;
He may be conquered; Lisois has subdued him,
And shall he triumph o'er the blood of kings
Who never yet submitted to a foe?
Awake, my friend, and be our great example
In every virtue.

DUKE.

Yes, I will do all,
All for Amelia; she must yield at last.

Her laws, her king, her master, shall be mine:
I have no will but her, and in her eyes
Will read my duty, and my fate: possessed
Of the dear treasure, will be reconciled
To every foe. O how my heart enjoys
The pleasing hope! I had no cause to fear,
I have no rival; if thou art not loved,
I can have none: who in this court would dare
To cast one look towards Amelia? now
Her vain pretexts are vanished; reason, glory,
My interest, and my birth, the sacred right
Of my great ancestors, all, all unite
To bind the nuptial chain, and make me happy.
Henceforth I am the king's, and will support him:
So virtue bids, and beauty has commanded.
On this blest day will I confirm the oaths
I made to love: away, my friend, I leave
My interest and my fortunes to thy care.

LISOIS.

Permit me, then, my lord, to seek the king:
I could have wished that this important change
Were to the hero, not the lover due;
But be it as it may, the effect's too glorious
To blame the cause: I triumph in thy weakness,
And bless for once the lucky power of love.

SCENE V.

THE DUKE, LISOIS, AN OFFICER.

OFFICER.

My lord, the foe advances; we expect
A fierce assault, and wait your orders; time
Is precious.

DUKE.

Cruel fate! to counteract
My noble purpose! then farewell to peace,
And welcome, victory! I'll deserve Amelia:
I heed not these rash fools: of all the foes
I have to conquer, there's but one to fear,
And that's—Amelia.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

DUKE OF FOIX, LISOIS.

DUKE.

The day is ours; thanks to thy friendly hand
That guided my rash youth; thy noble soul,
In peace or war, is my best counsellor.

LISOIS.

The glorious fire that animates thy heart
Must always conquer, when 'tis checked by prudence,
As here it was: preserve this happy virtue,
'Twill make thee happy, and 'twill make thee great;
The coward is restless, but the hero calm.

DUKE.

How is the lover? can he ever taste
Of sweet tranquillity? But say, my friend,
This unknown chief, that mounted on our ramparts,
And with his single arm so long suspended
The doubtful victory: I grow jealous of him:
Where is he? what became of him?

LISOIS.

Surrounded
By slaughtered friends, alone long time he stood,
And braved opposing legions; but what most
Surprised us, when at length he had escaped
From every danger, wondrous to relate!
He yielded up himself a prisoner to us;
Conceals his rank and name, accuses heaven,
And begs for instant death. One friend alone
Attends him, and partakes his sorrows.

DUKE.

Lisois,
Who can this bold, this fearless soldier be?
He wore his beaver down: some secret charm
O'erpowered my trembling soul when I opposed
him.
Whether this fatal passion that enslaves me
Hath spread its weakness o'er each faculty,
And left the soft impression on my soul,
Or that my bleeding country's voice alarmed
This conscious heart, and silently reproached me.

LISOIS.

As for the weakness of thy soul, advice
I know were vain, but sure thy country's voice
May still be heard; now is the time to show
The greatness of thy soul, and give us peace.
Fortune, that smiled on us to-day, perhaps
May frown to-morrow, and thy pride be forced
To sue for pardon to a haughty foe.
Since thou art happy, and Amelia's thine,
Now rest thy glory on the common cause,
This brave unknown may forward our designs;
Let us improve the lucky moment.

DUKE.

Yes,
My friend, I will do all to serve Amelia,
Her cause is mine: I must prepare the minds
Of my brave followers for the change; to thee,
And to thy happy counsels, every bliss,
Glory and peace, and hymeneal joys,
To thee I owe, to friendship and to love.

SCENE II.

LISOIS, VAMIR AND EMAR *at the farther end of the stage.*

LISOIS.

It is the noble prisoner, and his friend,
If I mistake not: this way they advance;
He seems o'erwhelmed with deep despair.

VAMIR.

O heaven!
Where am I? whither dost thou lead me?

LISOIS.

Stranger,
Whoe'er thou art, be comforted; thy fate
Hath thrown thee into noble hands: thou'lt find
A generous master, who can see desert
Even in a foe: may I not ask thy name?

VAMIR.

I am a poor abandoned wretch, the sport
Of fortune, one whose least affliction is
To be a captive, and from every eye
Would wish to hide the story of my fate:

It is enough to be supremely wretched,
Without this cruel witness of my woe:
Too soon my name and sorrows will be known.

LISOIS.

Respect is due to misery like thine;
I will not urge thee further, but retire:
Perhaps even here thy soul may find relief
In generous treatment, and a milder fate.

SCENE III.

VAMIR, EMAR.

VAMIR.

A milder fate! I must not hope for it:
O I have lived too long.

EMAR.

Thank heaven, my lord,
That we are fallen amongst such noble foes,
And shall not groan beneath a stranger's power.

VAMIR.

No yoke sometimes so galling as a brother's.

EMAR.

But you were bred together, and the ties
Of tenderest friendship linked your hearts.

VAMIR.

They did:
But O the friendship of our early years
Soon takes its flight: he loved me once, and still
This heart retains a brother's kindness for him:
I cannot hate him, though he conquered me.

EMAR.

He knows not yet how great a captive comes
To grace his triumph; knows not that a brother
Is in his power, whom vengeance had inspired.

VAMIR.

No: Emar, never did a thought of vengeance
Enter my heart; a different passion swayed
The soul of Vamir: can it be, just heaven!
Or is it but the lying voice of fame,
That my Amelia's false, that she has broke
Her solemn vows? for whom, too? added guilt
To her, and double sorrow to thy friend!
The sacred laws of nature, and the ties
Of tender love, all broken, all betrayed!
Unjust, inhuman brother!

EMAR.

Knows he then
How dear a treasure he hath robbed thee of
In thy Amelia? did not Vamir say
That he was still a stranger to thy love?

VAMIR.

But she is not: she knows what solemn ties,
What strict engagements, bound us to each other:
That at the altar, ere we had confirmed
Our mutual vows, the barbarous Moor rushed in,
And tore her from me; the base ravishers
Escaped my vengeance, and my happier brother
Enjoys the precious treasure Vamir lost.
Ungrateful woman! came I here, my friend,
But to reproach her? what will it avail?
She will not listen to my fond complaint:
But to my royal master I have lived
A faithful servant, and to false Amelia,

And faithful will I die: when she shall know
How well I loved her, she may shed a tear,
And in a brother's arms lament my fate.

EMAR.

Repress thy sorrows; see, the duke approaches.

VAMIR.

Be still, my heart.

SCENE IV.

DUKE OF FOIX, VAMIR, EMAR.

DUKE.

This mystery alarms me:
But I must see this noble captive: ha!
He turns aside with horror.

VAMIR.

Hateful life!
Must I support thee still? must I again
Behold the faithless wretch?

DUKE.

What do I hear?

VAMIR.

Dost thou not know me?

DUKE.

Ha! my brother! Vamir!

VAMIR.

Alas! too sure I am that wretched brother,
Thy vanquished foe, a poor abandoned captive.

DUKE.

Thou art my brother still, and I forgive thee;
But 'tis most strange, and most unnatural:
Could the king find no instrument but thee
To execute his vengeance on my head?
What had I done to Vamir?

VAMIR.

Made his life
Unhappy: would that thou hadst taken it from me!

DUKE.

Dreadful effects of civil strife!

VAMIR.

More dreadful
Are the deep wounds that pierce the heart of Vamir.

DUKE.

Against another foe I might have shown
A soldier's courage, but I pity thee.

VAMIR.

Pity thyself, the wretch who has betrayed
His country, and deceived the king that loved him;
A traitor, and unworthy of thy race.

DUKE.

Brand me not, Vamir, with opprobrious name
Of traitor, lest I should forget myself,
And spurn thee for the insult: no, my brother,
I'm not that base, ungrateful wretch thou thinkest me;
Thou seest me ready to restore fair peace,
And heal the wounds of my divided country.

VAMIR.

Thou heal our wounds! thou—

DUKE.

Yes: the day that seemed
So fatal to thy peace shall quench the flames
Of public discord, and unite us all.

VAMIR.

O 'tis a day of sorrow.

DUKE.

Of delight
And joy, the day that crowns my wishes —

VAMIR.

How!

DUKE.

Yes, Vamir, all is changed, and I am happy.

VAMIR.

It may be so: I heard indeed thy heart
These three months past has been the slave of love;
And if report say true, most violent
And fierce thy passion.

DUKE.

Thou hast heard aright;
I love her even to madness: thou art come
In happy hour to make our bliss complete.
Yes: I will lay my friends, my foes, my every claim,
Revenge and glory, all beneath her feet.
Go, tell her two unhappy brothers, long
[*To his attendants.*
By adverse fate to different interests bound,
Wait but a look from her to be united.
[*To Vamir.*
Blame not my passion, Vamir, when thou seest
The lovely object; soon thou wilt approve it.

VAMIR.

[*Aside.*

And does she love thee? cruel thought!

DUKE.

At least
She ought: one obstacle alone remained,
And that shall be removed.

VAMIR.

[*Aside.*

Inhuman brother!
Knowest thou what led me to this fatal place,
And meanest thou to insult me?

DUKE.

Let us bury
In deep oblivion every thought of discord;
Behold, the fair Amelia comes.

SCENE V.

DUKE OF FOIX, VAMIR, AMELIA.

AMELIA.

O heaven!
What do I see? I die.

DUKE.

Amelia, listen,
And mark how happiness ariseth oft
From our misfortunes; this day I have conquered,
And this day found a brother; thou, my Vamir,
Shalt be a witness to the power of love.
What nor Amelia's prayers, nor her reproaches,
My generous friend, my country, and my king,
Long time in vain solicited, her charms

At length have won: to them I yield submissive.
Amelia, whilst I was thy sovereign's foe,
Thou wouldst not listen to my vows: henceforth
I have no laws, no friends, no king, but thine:
So love commands, and love shall be obeyed.
Vamir, thou'rt free: be thou the messenger
Of welcome tidings to the court: away,
And tell the king I hasten to present
His fair ally, the conqueror who subdued
A rebel's heart, and of a dangerous foe
Hath made a faithful subject; changed by her,
And her alone.

VAMIR.

[*Aside.*

'Tis as I wished: my fate
Will soon be known: speak, and pronounce our doom.

DUKE.

Amelia, speak, art thou not satisfied
With my submission? Is it not enough
To see a conqueror thus humbly kneel
Before thee? Can my life alone content
Thy cruel heart? take it, ungrateful woman!
I wished but to preserve it for thy sake;
For thee alone I lived, for thee will die.

AMELIA.

I am astonished, and my faltering voice
Will scarce give utterance to my words—my lord,
If thy great soul laments thy country's fate,
And feels for her distress, thy generous care
Must spring from nobler motives than the wish
To serve Amelia; thou hast heard the voice
Of powerful nature: what hath love to do
Where only honor hath a right to dictate?

DUKE.

'Tis thy own work, Amelia, all thy own:
O'er every interest, every passion, love
Superior reigns; reproach me, cover me
With shame, no matter: I must force thy heart;
Come to the altar.

VAMIR.

Darest thou———

AMELIA.

No, my lord;
I'd sooner die: my life's at thy command,
But not my heart: there is a fatal bar
Between us, and I never can be thine.

DUKE.

'Tis well, ungrateful—dost thou hear her, Vamir?
But I'll be calm: I'll not complain of thee,
I see thee now: the soft persuasive arts
That call our passions forth, the flattering hope
That's given but to betray, the subtle poison
Spread o'er our hearts, deceitful all and vain,
No longer shall seduce my easy faith,
The eye of reason hath detected them,
And the same art that bound hath set me free:
I will not blush before thee, Vamir: no,
I will not be despised: but let me see
This hidden rival, bring him here before me,
And I will yield him up the worthless prize;
For know, I have contempt enough for both
To wish you were united; that alone
Should be your punishment.

AMELIA.

Perhaps, my lord,
'Twere fittest for Amelia to retire

In silence, but I hold my honor dear,
And must defend it: I have been accused
Before thy brother, and must answer thee.
Know, then, I'm destined to another's arms;
I own my love, my tender passion for him;
Amelia were unworthy of his heart,
Had she e'er given a distant hope to thee:
But thou wouldst seize my faith and liberty,
As if they were by right of conquest thine.
I owed thee much, but injuries like these,
My lord, discharge the debt of gratitude,
And cancel all: I saw, and pitied long
The violence of thy fruitless passion for me;
Do not then make me hate thee: I rejected
Thy proffered vows, but never scorned thy love:
I wished for thy esteem, and gave thee mine.

DUKE.

Perfidious woman! naught hast thou deserved
But my resentment, which thou soon shalt know
Is equal to my love: thou waitedst then
For Vamir to be witness of my shame!
I should have thought he was himself the traitor,
If—but he ne'er beheld thy fatal charms,
My happier brother never knew Amelia.
Who is this rival? let me know his name,
But think not I will tamely yield to him.
No: I deceived thee there, but cannot long
Dissemble; I will drag thee to the altar,
There, as he dies in torment, shall he see
Our hands united; I will dip in blood
The torch of Hymen: well I know that princes
Have been despised for mean and vulgar slaves,
But I shall find him.

VAMIR.

Why shouldst thou suppose
This rival so contemptible?

DUKE.

And why
Shouldst thou excuse him? Didst thou never know her?
'Tis dreadful to conceive it. If thou didst,
Now, traitor, tremble.

VAMIR.

Vamir tremble? No:
Too long already I have borne in silence
Thy cruel insults; know me now, barbarian,
Know a despair that's equal to thy own:
Strike here; behold thy brother, and thy rival.

DUKE.

Thou, Vamir, thou?

VAMIR.

Yes: for these two years past
We've been united in the strictest bonds
Of tender love; the only good on earth
I wished to keep, thy cruel hand hath strove
To ravish from me, made my life unhappy:
Judge of my miseries by thy own: we both
Are jealous, both were born the slaves of passion:
Hatred and love, resentment, and despair,
Possess our souls, and all in the extreme:
Thou wert my rival, therefore I opposed thee:
Furious and blind, I ran, I flew to save
The object of my love; not all thy power
Restrained me, nor my weakness, time nor place,
Not even thy noble courage; love prevailed
O'er friendship, and the ties of blood: be thou

Cruel like me, like me unnatural.
Whilst I have life, thou never canst enjoy
Thy conquest, never canst possess Amelia:
Strike, then, and punish, shed thy brother's blood;
But when thou draggest her with thee to the altar,
Remember, she's thy sister, and my wife.

DUKE.

Guards, seize the traitor, take him from my sight.

AMELIA.

Stay, cruel prince; art thou inflexible,
Deaf to the voice of nature? O, my lord!

VAMIR.

Sue not for me, Amelia, Vamir's fate
Is to be envied: he most claims your pity
Who hath betrayed his king, and injured thee:
I am revenged, the victory is mine;
For thou art hated here, and I'm beloved.

AMELIA.

[*Kneeling to the Duke.*
O dearest prince, my lord, see at your feet———

DUKE.

Away with him: rise, madam, for thy tears
And fruitless prayers to save a traitor's life
But pour fresh poison o'er my wounded heart
That bleeds for thee; but I will die, Amelia,
Not unrevenged: when thou shalt feel my rage
Accuse thyself; the work is all thy own.

AMELIA.

I cannot leave thee: O my lord, yet hear———

DUKE.

If I must hear thee, speak, go on.

SCENE VI.

THE DUKE, VAMIR, AMELIA, LISOIS.

LISOIS.

My lord,
The people are in arms; at Vamir's name
They rose tumultuous, and on every side
Disorder reigns; the affrighted soldiers leave
Their colors, and in wild confusion fly:
Meantime the foe unites his scattered powers,
And rushes on us.

DUKE.

Go, ungrateful woman!
Thou hast not long to glory in thy crimes;
Follow her—

[*To one of her attendants.*

I must to the factious crowd
And show myself: thou, Lisois, guard this traitor.

SCENE VII.

VAMIR, LISOIS.

LISOIS.

Art thou a traitor? couldst thou thus disgrace
Thy noble blood, to violate the laws
Of nature? could a prince so far forget
His duty and himself?

VAMIR.

I never did:
The people's just: my brother is a rebel,
And has betrayed his master.

LISOIS.

Hear me, Vamir;
My soul desires no greater happiness
Than to unite you: long have I beheld
With deep regret my bleeding country's woes,
Our fields laid waste, and nature sacrificed
To discord and revenge; the haughty Moor,
Raised on our ruins, menacing the state,
Which we have weakened by our own divisions.
O if thou bearest a heart that's truly noble,
And worthy of thy race, now save thy country;
Exert thy power to reconcile the king,
Soften thy brother, and put out the flames
Of civil war.

VAMIR.

Impossible! thy cares
Are fruitless all and vain: if naught but discord,
Revenge and hatred, led me to the field,
Had glory and ambition fired my breast,
Thou mightest have hoped indeed to reunite us;
But there's a bar more fatal still behind.

LISOIS.

What could it be! O tell me, Vamir.

VAMIR.

Love:
Love that has filled this breast with savage fury,
And made my brother cruel and inhuman.

LISOIS.

Good heaven! that vain caprice should thus destroy
The noblest purposes! Almighty love,
Canst thou reverse the laws of nature, fill
With unrelenting hate the jealous hearts

Of fondest brothers, and in every clime
By private passions work the public ruin?
Vamir, I feel for both, but long have served
Thy brother; I must hence, and second him
Against thy factious friends: the strife is dreadful,
And much I fear will have a bloody end;
But I must fly to succor him: farewell;
Thou art my prisoner, but I leave thee here;
Give me thy word, that shall suffice.

VAMIR.

I do.

LISOIS.

Would I could knit you in the bonds of peace!
But much more to be feared than all thy foes
And far more fatal, is the tyrant, love.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

VAMIR, AMELIA, EMAR.

AMELIA.

O Vamir, how the hand of heaven hath marked
My life with sad variety of woe!
The chance of war, that tore me from thy arms,
Once more hath joined us; but, alas! we meet
On mournful terms, meet but to part; my Vamir,
Didst thou not say it must be so?

VAMIR.

It must:
Thou seest me chained by honor's laws beneath

A rival's power: my sacred word is given:
Vamir may die, but must not follow thee.

AMELIA.

Thou who hast dared to fight, art thou afraid
To flee from him?

VAMIR.

I am: my honor binds me:
Take thou advantage of the general tumult,
Which favors thy retreat: a guard attends
To aid thy flight; heaven will protect thy virtues;
Hope for the best.

AMELIA.

What can Amelia hope,
When thou art from her?

VAMIR.

'Tis but for a day.

AMELIA.

O but that day will be an age to me.
Grant, heaven! my tears and terrors may be vain.
The Moor, I know, thirsts for my Vamir's blood;
Thinkest thou thy brother will not give it him?
He loves with fury, and he hates with rancor;
His hatred, like his love, is in extreme:
He is thy rival, and the Moor's ally.
I tremble for thee.

VAMIR.

He would never dare———

AMELIA.

O his impetuous passion knows no bounds!

VAMIR.

He must be taught to know them soon; the king
Comes to avenge us; half his force already
Throngs to the royal standard; if thou lovest me,
Fly, my Amelia, from the impending storm,
From dreadful slaughter, and the din of arms,
And all the terrors of a bloody field;
But, above all, avoid my furious rival,
Whose jealous love despised, will turn to rage;
Avoid an insult Vamir must avenge,
Or perish in the attempt: my dear Amelia,
Hope of my life, the only good on earth
I have to boast, do not expose thyself
To needless dangers, but retire in safety.

AMELIA.

Why wilt thou hazard then thy precious life,
And stay without Amelia?

VAMIR.

When thou art safe,
I shall not fear my brother; soon perhaps
Vamir may prove his best support: to-day
I am his prisoner, but perchance to-morrow
May be his patron, and persuade the king
To spare a rebel: to protect my rival
Were noble triumph. Haste, Amelia, leave
This seat of danger.

AMELIA.

Wheresoever fate
Shall cast my hapless lot, I'll carry with me
My hatred and my love; 'midst every danger,
In the wild desert, or the gloomy dungeon,
In exile, or in chains, in death itself,

Still shall I think of, still adore my Vamir:
But O I cannot bear to live without thee!

VAMIR.

It is too much: thy griefs unman my soul.
What noise was that? O thou hast staid too long!

SCENE II.

AMELIA, VAMIR, DUKE OF FOIX, *Guards.*

DUKE.

I hear his voice; 'tis he: stay, villain, thou
Who hast betrayed me.

VAMIR.

I betrayed thee not.
Now satiate thy revenge, and take my life;
Lose not a moment, for the hand of heaven
Is raised against thee: tremble, slave, thy king
Approaches: thou hast conquered none but Vamir:
Thy master comes, take heed.

DUKE.

He may avenge,
But cannot save thee; for thy blood—

AMELIA.

O no,
Amelia's guilty: let Amelia die,
And not my Vamir: I deceived thy guards,
And bartered with them to assist my flight
From hated slavery, and a tyrant's power:
Punish my crimes, but, O respect a brother,
Respect thyself, thy own unblemished fame!

He ne'er betrayed, but loves and would have served thee,
Even when thy rage had doomed him to destruction.
What crime has he committed? none, my lord,
None but the crime of loving his Amelia.

DUKE.

The more thou pleadest for him, the more his guilt:
Thou art his murderer: thou, whose fatal charms
Have poisoned all our happiness, and armed
Our hands against each other, may the blood
Of both fall on thee! now thou weepest; thy tears
No longer shall deceive me: I must die,
But Vamir first shall perish. Yet I love thee,
Even yet thou mayest escape the fatal blow:
Accept my hand, attend me to the altar,
And seal his pardon there.

AMELIA.

Who, I, my lord?

DUKE.

It is enough.

AMELIA.

Shall I be false to Vamir?

DUKE.

Stop—answer me.

AMELIA.

I cannot.

DUKE.

Let him die.

VAMIR.

Amelia, never let his threats o'ercome
Thy noble faith, but love me well enough

To see me perish: leave me to my fate;
Now I shall fall triumphant: shouldst thou yield,
Vamir must die by his Amelia's hand.

DUKE.

Guards, drag the traitor to the tower: away.

SCENE III.

DUKE, AMELIA.

AMELIA.

And wilt thou make this horrid sacrifice?
Pollute thee with the blood of innocence?
Thou wilt not!

DUKE.

Yes: to hate thee, and to die,
Is all I wish; to see thee more unhappy,
More wretched than myself, to shed the blood
That's dearest to thee, and to make thy days
As full of woe as was that fatal hour
Which hath destroyed us all. Away, and leave me;
The sight of thee distracts me.

SCENE IV.

DUKE, AMELIA, LISOIS.

AMELIA.

From thy justice,
And, that alone, I can expect relief.
Help me to soften this obdurate heart:
Assist me, Lisois.

DUKE.

If thou listenest to her,
Thou art not my friend.

AMELIA.

I call just heaven to witness.

DUKE.

Hence from my sight: I loathe thee.

AMELIA.

Tyrant, go,
For I abhor thee; spite of all thy rage,
I thought a woman might at least command
Some cold respect: but love, that softens all,
Hath lost its tender influence o'er thy heart:
I leave thee to thy rage; go, sacrifice
Thy victims, amidst thy crimes be sure thou count
Amelia's death, and with it count thy own,
For vengeance comes, and in thy punishment
Unites us all; inglorious shalt thou perish,
And unlamented. Die, inhuman savage;
And may that hatred, that contempt of thee,
Which now I feel, pursue thy memory,
And after ages execrate thy name!

SCENE V.

DUKE OF FOIX, LISOIS.

DUKE.

Yes, cruel prophet, I expect the doom
Pronounced by thee, that discord's fatal hand
Shall seize on all, and join us in the tomb.

LISOIS.

Rage has o'erpowered him, and his senses fail.

DUKE.

What says my friend? am I to suffer shame
And insult thus; and shall my haughty rival
Bear off the false, perfidious, dear Amelia?
Wilt thou bear this, or waitest thou till the traitor
Shall raise a powerful faction to enslave me?

LISOIS.

Too well I see, my lord, the royal party
Hath spread sedition through the multitude,
And shook their faith.

DUKE.

Vamir lights up the flame:
He has betrayed us all.

LISOIS.

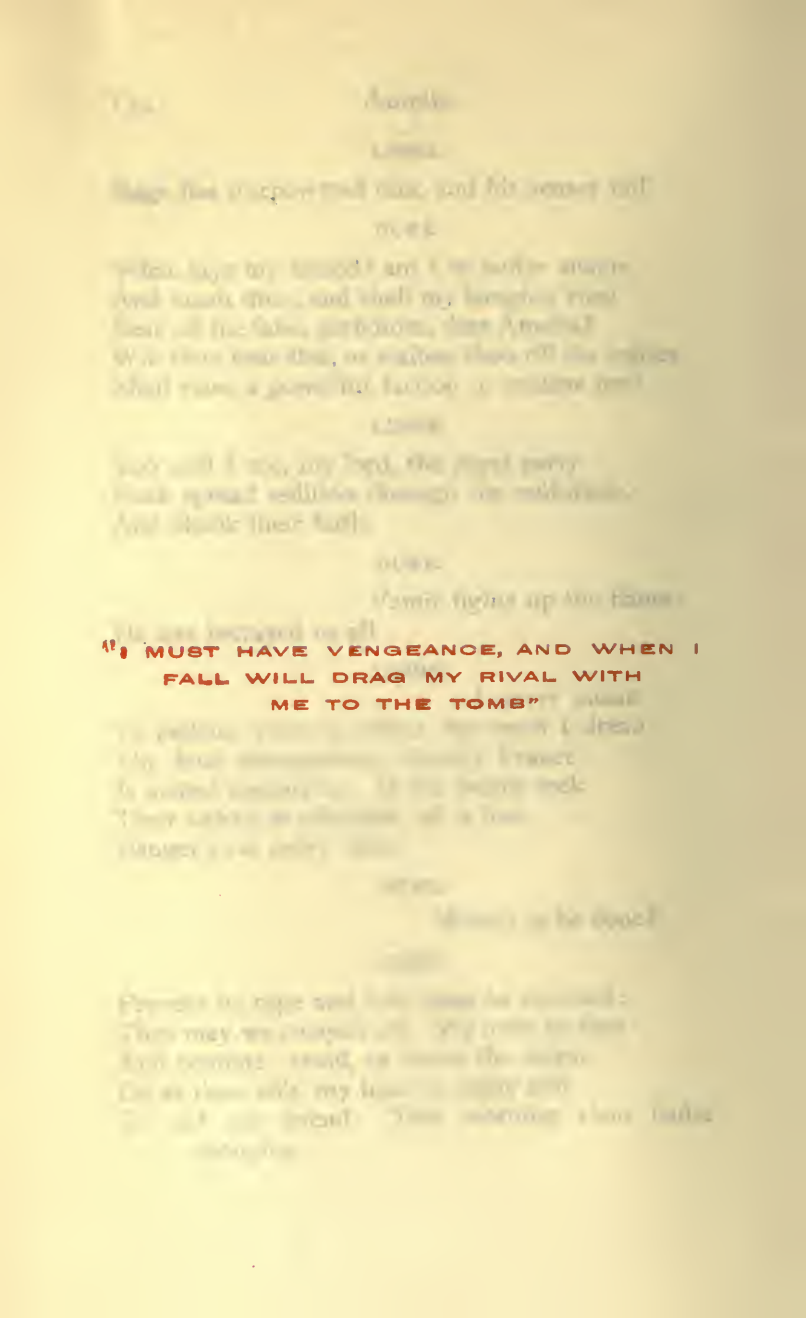
I never meant
To palliate Vamir's crimes, for much I dread
The fatal consequence; already France
Is armed against us. If the people seek
Their safety in rebellion, all is lost,
Danger's on every side.

DUKE.

What's to be done?

LISOIS.

Prevent it; rage and love must be subdued;
Then may we conquer all. We must be firm
And resolute; avoid, or brave the storm,
Do as thou wilt, my hand is ready still
To aid my friend. This morning thou hadst thoughts


"I MUST HAVE VENGEANCE, AND WHEN I FALL WILL DRAG MY RIVAL WITH ME TO THE TOMB"

Of treating with the king: if thou commandest,
I'll go, my lord, even now, and sue for peace;
Or if we try the fortune of the day,
The faithful Lisois shall attend thee still:
There, if thou fallest, thy friend shall not survive thee.

DUKE.

Alone I will descend into the grave:
Live thou, to serve my cause, and to avenge me.
My hour is come, I must fulfil my fate:
Who wishes but for death, is sure to find it;
But mine should come with all his terrors round him;
I must have vengeance; and whene'er I fall,
Will drag my rival with me to the tomb.

LISOIS.

What horrid thoughts are these!

DUKE.

In yonder tower
He is confined: 'tis under thy command,
And thou didst promise, that whene'er—

LISOIS.

Of whom
Speakest thou, my lord? a brother?

DUKE.

No: a traitor,
My worst of foes, a rival who abhors me;
One who has robbed me of my dearest treasure:
The Moor demands his head, and I have promised
To give it him.

LISOIS.

Ha! promised to shake off
The bonds of nature and humanity!

DUKE.

Long since they had proscribed him.

LISOIS.

And to them,
Thou yieldest his life?

DUKE.

Not to their vengeance only,
But to my own, which shall be satisfied.
What is the Moor to me, or what my country?

LISOIS.

To love then you would make the sacrifice,
And I must be the executioner.

DUKE.

No: I expect not so much justice from thee;
I am a wretch, abandoned and forlorn,
Betrayed by love, deserted by my friend;
But there are those who yet will keep their promise;
Others, perhaps, may serve me, nor allege
Such poor excuses for ingratitude.

LISOIS.

[*After a long silence.*

I am resolved; and be it guilt or justice,
Ne'er shalt thou say that Lisois hath betrayed thee:
Thou art unhappy: Vamir is a traitor.
It is enough; I love thee, and consent:
There is a time for desperate extremes,
When duties the most sacred must give way
To hard necessity: at such an hour
I cannot suffer thee to try the faith
Of any heart but mine: success alone

Must prove my friendship: soon shalt thou determine
Whether thy Lisois loved thee, and was faithful.

DUKE.

Once more in sorrow I behold a friend;
Deserted by the world, in thee I find
My only refuge: thou wilt not permit
A haughty rival to insult my rage,
To trample on my ashes, and enjoy
My kingdom in the arms of my Amelia.

LISOIS.

I will not; but in recompense for this,
I must demand another sacrifice.

DUKE.

What is it? speak.

LISOIS.

I cannot bear the Moor,
Our insolent protector; cannot bear
To see him lord it o'er thy noble subjects.
I would not serve a tyrant, nor submit
To shameful slavery for a poor support
We do not want; 'tis in our power at least
To die without him: leave to me, my lord,
The conduct of this day, perhaps my service
May claim it of thee: Lisois and the Moor
Would ne'er agree: I must command alone,
To the last hour.

DUKE.

Thou shalt: I'll give thee all
Thou canst desire, let but Amelia feel
Despair like mine, and weep in tears of blood
Her treacherous lover: let me hear her groans

In my last moments to delight my soul;
And for the rest, 'tis equal all: to thee
I trust my glory; go, dispose, command,
Prepare thee for the field. I hope not now
For victory, nor for honorable death;
For what is honor to a heart like mine,
Sunk in despair! O be the sad remembrance
Of a false mistress, and a cruel rival,
Buried with me in everlasting silence!

LISOIS.

Eternal night, if possible, should hide
Such dreadful deeds: would death had closed our eyes
Before this day of horrors; but I go
To keep my word, and save my friend. Farewell.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

DUKE OF FOIX, AN OFFICER.

DUKE.

Perpetual misery! am I doomed to see
Nothing but faction, treason, and revolt?
Where are the rebels, do they mutiny?

OFFICER.

At sight of you, my lord, the crowd dispersed.

DUKE.

On every side I am oppressed by Vamir;
All hearts are his; my miseries are complete;
But what hath Lisois done?

OFFICER.

His watchful courage
Defends our ramparts 'gainst the foe.

DUKE.

That soldier
You brought to me in secret, has he done
What I commanded?

OFFICER.

Yes, my lord: ere now
He's at the tower.

DUKE.

'Tis well: a common arm
Will do it best, and execute my vengeance
Without remorse: Lisois' uncertain heart
Was not to be depended on; methought
He looked with too much coolness on my rage;
We seldom try to mitigate a grief,
Which we contemn: to other hands I'll trust
My great revenge.—Go thou, and fetch my standard,
Let it be brought upon the ramparts to me:
New dangers press, and for the field again
We must prepare: let the same zeal inspire thee,
And the same courage, imitate thy master,
And learn of him—to die,

[*Exit Officer.*

Ere this 'tis done.
A base, ungrateful woman dips my hands
In brother's blood, and leads me to the tomb:
A guilty murderer, ha! what means my heart?
I've nourished vengeance long; and shall I not
Enjoy it now? I tremble: and a voice,
Solemn and sad, cries from my inmost soul,

Stop, Foix, he is thy brother, hapless prince,
Call back the murderer: Vamir was thy friend.
O sweet remembrance of our infant years,
When in the days of innocence our hearts
Spoke nature's language, and imparted free
Our mutual wishes! O how oft has Vamir
Partook my griefs, and with a brother's hand,
Wiped off the falling tears! and shall I now
Destroy him? O thou fatal passion, where,
Where hast thou led me? sure I was not born
This savage, this barbarian: Vamir yet
Was guilty; Vamir robbed me of my life,
In my Amelia: still I am unjust;
He loved; was that a crime to merit death?
Alas! nor time, nor war, nor absence, cooled
Their faithful passion; still their guiltless flame
In purest lustre shone, before my heart
Was poisoned by the cruel draught of love:
But Vamir braves my wrath, and is my foe;
Deceives me, hates me; yet he is my brother.
He should have lived, he was beloved, and happy,
And only I should perish: I will die
But as I lived, with honor. Pity melts me,
Nature determines, and I will forgive him.
'Tis time—

SCENE II.

DUKE OF FOIX, AN OFFICER.

DUKE.

Prevent a parricide: away,
Haste to the tower, reverse my orders: go.
And let my brother——

OFFICER.

O my lord——

DUKE.

What sayest thou!
Run, fly, obey me.

OFFICER.

Near the gate this moment
I saw a body covered o'er with blood,
Carried in secret forth by Lisois' orders,
And much I fear——

DUKE.

O heaven! my brother's dead
And I yet live: earth hath not swallowed me,
Nor lightning blasted: a base murderer,
Foe to his country, an unnatural brother,
How love has changed me! what a load of guilt
Have I to answer for! the veil's removed;
And now, alas! I know myself too well;
I cannot be more guilty: O my brother!
I feel I loved thee, yet I slew thee, Vamir.

OFFICER.

Amelia comes, my lord, and begs to speak
In private with you.

DUKE.

O I must not see her!
Not for the world: I cannot bear it: no,
She will avenge the murder in my blood:
But let her come: I tremble to behold her.

SCENE III.

DUKE OF FOIX, AMELIA, THAIS.

AMELIA.

My lord, you have prevailed: and since that hatred
(How can I call it by another name?)
Which hath so long pursued me, now requires
A brother's blood, or his Amelia's hand,
Take it: the choice is made, and I am thine:
Remember, I'm the purchase of thy guilt:
Loosen his chains, and set my Vamir free,
That I no more may tremble for his life,
And I will give thee all, yield up my hopes
Of happiness with him, and follow thee,
Even to the altar; there the hand that gives
My faith away shall punish all my weakness.
Know, at the temple, where thy bridal vows——
But thou desirest my hand, and that alone
I have to give thee: ha! thou art silent: say,
Is Vamir, is thy brother freed already?

DUKE.

My brother!

AMELIA.

Gracious heaven!—remove my fears,
Thy eyes are bathed in tears.

DUKE.

Thou askest his life

AMELIA.

What do I hear? didst thou not promise me——

DUKE.

It is too late.

AMELIA.

Too late! O Vamir!

DUKE.

Yes,
It is indeed; would it were not, Amelia;
The cruel Lisois has obeyed my orders
Too faithfully: O live, to punish me;
Pierce this inhuman, this unnatural heart,
That loved thee but too well: I killed my brother,
But for thy sake: revenge on me the crimes
Which but for thee I never had committed.

AMELIA.

[*Falling into the arms of Thais.*
Vamir is dead, barbarian!

DUKE.

And thy hand
Shall shed the murderer's blood.

AMELIA.

[*Fainting.*
And is he gone?
My Vamir——

DUKE.

Thy reproaches——

AMELIA.

Spare me, spare me,
I'll not reproach thee; take thy sorrows hence,
And thy repentance: let me but embrace him,
And die.

DUKE.

Amelia, thou hast too much cause
To grieve, but O for pity take this life

That's hateful to me; but I've not deserved
To perish by thy hand; but thou shalt guide——

SCENE IV.

DUKE, AMELIA, LISOIS.

LISOIS.

What would thy rashness do?

DUKE.

[*They disarm him.*

An act of justice:

Punish myself.

AMELIA.

Wert thou his vile accomplice?

DUKE.

Thou minister of guilt, thou hast obeyed me.

LISOIS.

I promised you, my lord, and I have done
But what I ought.

DUKE.

Thy stubborn virtue oft
Hath checked my follies, and opposed my weakness;
But when I bade thee be a murderer,
And kill my brother, then thou wert obedient.

LISOIS.

When I refused but now to execute
The bloody office, didst thou not employ
Another hand?

DUKE.

Love, powerful love, that chained
My reason down, and swayed my foolish heart,
Love pleads for me; but thou whose wisdom calms
Each rising passion, whose unaltered soul,
Firm and unshaken, I so oft have feared,
So oft respected, that thou, thus unmoved,
Shouldst suffer such a deed of horror; O
'Tis terrible!

LISOIS.

Since sorrow and repentance,
Virtue's best monitors, have pierced thy soul
With just remorse: since, spite of all thy rashness,
To save a brother's blood thou gladly now
Wouldst give thy own; ye both shall find a friend.
Keep thou thy penitence.

[*To the Duke.*

Dry up thy tears.

[*To Amelia.*

This is a day of triumph. Prince, come forth:
Embrace thy brother.

[*The Scene opens, and discovers Vamir.*

AMELIA.

O my Vamir!

DUKE.

Ha!
My brother!

AMELIA.

Gracious heaven!

DUKE.

Can it be?

VAMIR, *advancing to the front.*

Again I see, again embrace my brother.

DUKE.

O thy forgiveness makes my crime still greater.

AMELIA.

O noble Lisois, thou hast given me life.

DUKE.

Life to us all.

LISOIS.

A base assassin raised
His arm against Vamir, but I felled the traitor,
And laid him breathless at my feet, then feigned
That I had shed thy brother's blood: I knew
Thou wouldst repent, and wish the deed undone.

DUKE.

This was a service I can ne'er reward
But by endeavoring to be worthy of it:
My crime sits heavy on me, and my eyes,
Fixed on the earth, dare not look up to Vamir,
And to the wronged Amelia.

VAMIR.

We would both
Have served thee with our royal master; both
Are still devoted to thee. What, my brother,
Is thy design? O speak!

DUKE.

To do you justice:
To expiate, by the greatest punishment,
The greatest crime that love and fierce resentment
Could e'er commit: long I adored Amelia;
Even when I gave her Vamir up to death,
I loved Amelia: I adore her still,
Nay, more than ever, yet I yield her to thee,

And sacrifice my heart to make you blest.
Take her, be happy, and forgive thy brother.

VAMIR.

Behold me at thy feet, with gratitude
Warm as thy bounty, as thy love sincere.

AMELIA.

Permit me to embrace thy knees with Vamir,
Accept our tenderest friendship, for thy goodness
Has amply paid for all my sufferings past.

DUKE.

No more of this, it doubles my misfortunes,
And shows me but what happiness I've lost:
But I will learn from you to follow virtue,
My heart is yours: I'm now indeed thy brother,
By thy example I will love my country.
Let us away, and to the king relate
My crimes, my sorrows, and thy happiness:
Let Vamir's zeal and Vamir's truth be mine,
Faithful to France, to friendship, and to thee;
Foix shall deserve your pardon and your praise;
Ye shall forget his follies and his crimes,
And henceforth know him only by his virtues.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

ŒDIPUS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ŒDIPUS, King of Thebes.
JOCASTE, Queen of Thebes.
PHILOCTETES, Prince of Eubæa.
HIGH PRIEST.
ARASPES, Confidant of Œdipus.
ÆGINA, Confidante of Jocaste.
DIMAS, Friend of Philoctetes.
PHORBAS, an old Man of Thebes.
ICARUS, an old Man of Corinth.
CHORUS of THEBANS.

SCENE THEBES.

[Œdipus was written when M. de Voltaire was but nineteen years of age. It was played for the first time in 1718, and ran five-and-forty nights. Du Frêsne, a celebrated actor, and of the same age with the author, played the part of Œdipus; and Madame Desmarêts, a famous actress, did Jocaste, and soon after quitted the stage. In this edition, the part of Philoctetes is restored, and stands exactly as it was in the first representation.]

ŒDIPUS.

ACT I. SCENE I.

PHILOCTETES, DIMAS.

DIMAS.

Is it my friend, my Philoctetes? Whence
And wherefore comest thou to distempered Thebes
In search of death, to brave the wrath of heaven?
For, know, the gods on this devoted land
Wreak their full vengeance: mortals dare not tread
The guilty soil, to death and horror long
Consigned, and from the living world cut off:
Away, begone!

PHILOCTETES.

It suits a wretch like me:
Leave me, my friend, to my unhappy fate;
And only tell me, if the wrath divine
Hath, in its rapid progress, spared the queen.

DIMAS.

Jocaste lives; but round her throne still spreads
The dire contagion; every fatal moment
Deprives her of some faithful subject: death
Steals closer by degrees, and seems to threat
Her sacred life. But heaven, we trust, will soon
Withdraw its vengeful arm: such scenes of blood
Will sure appease its rage.

PHILOCTETES.

What horrid crime
Could bring down so severe a punishment?

DIMAS.

Since the king's death——

PHILOCTETES.

The king! ha! Laius—

DIMAS.

Died

Some four years since.

PHILOCTETES.

Ha! Laius dead! indeed!
What sweet seducing hope awakes my soul?
Jocaste! will the gods at length be kind?
May Philoctetes still be thine? But say,
Dimas, how fell the king?

DIMAS.

'Tis four years since
For the last time towards Bœotia, led
By fate, you came; scarce had you bent your way
To Asia, e'er the unhappy Laius fell
By some base hand.

PHILOCTETES.

Assassinated, sayest thou?

DIMAS.

This was the cause, the source of all our ills,
The ruin of this wretched country: shocked
At the sad stroke, we wept the general loss,
When lo! the minister of wrath divine,
(Fatal to innocence, and favoring long
Unpunished guilt) a dreadful monster came,
(O Philoctetes, would thou hadst been here!)
And ravaged all our borders, horrid form!
Made for destruction by avenging heaven,
With human voice, an eagle, woman, lion,

Unnatural mixture! rage with cunning joined
United to destroy us: naught remained
To save but this alone; in phrase obscure
The monster had proposed to affrighted Thebes
A strange enigma, which who could unfold
Should save his country; if he failed, must die.
Reluctant we obeyed the hard decree.
Instant the general voice aloud proclaimed
The kingdom his reward, who, by the gods
Inspired, should first unveil the mystery.
The aged and the wise, by hope misled,
With fruitless science braved the monster's rage;
Vain knowledge all! all tried and trying fell,
Till Œdipus, the heir to Corinth's throne,
Endowed with wisdom far above his years,
Fearless, and led by fortune, came, beheld,
Unfolded all, and took the great reward;
Lives still, and reigns o'er Thebes; but reigns, alas!
O'er dying subjects, and a desert land.
Vainly we hoped to see the wayward fates
Chained to his throne, and yielding to the hand
Of Œdipus, our great deliverer.
A little time the gods propitious smiled,
And blessed us with a gleam of transient peace;
But barrenness and famine soon destroyed
Our airy hopes: ills heaped on ills succeed,
A dreadful plague unpeoples half the realms
Of sickly Thebes, snatching the poor remains
Just escaped from famine and the grave: high heaven
Hath thus ordained, and such our hapless fate.
But say, illustrious hero, whom the gods
Have long approved, say, wherefore hast thou left
The paths of glory, and the smiles of fortune,
To seek the regions of affliction here?

PHILOCTETES.

I come to join my sorrows and my tears,
For know the world with me hath lost its best
And noblest friend: ne'er shall these eyes behold
The offspring of the gods, like them unconquered,
Earth's best support, the guardian deity
Of innocence oppressed: I mourn a friend,
The world a father.

DIMAS.

Is Alcides dead?

PHILOCTETES.

These hands performed the melancholy office,
Laid on his funeral pile the first of men;
The all-conquering arrows, those dear dreadful gifts
The son of Jove bequeathed me, have I brought,
With his cold ashes, here, where I will raise
A tomb and altars to my valued friend.
O! had he lived! had but indulgent heaven,
In pity to mankind, prolonged his days,
Far from Jocaste I had still remained;
And, though I might have cherished still my vain
And hopeless passion, had not wandered here,
Or left Alcides for a woman's love.

DIMAS.

Oft have I pitied thy unhappy flame,
Caught in thy earliest youth, increasing still
And growing with thy growth: Jocaste, forced
By a hard father to a hateful bed,
Unwillingly partook the throne of Laius.
Alas! what tears those fatal nuptials cost,
What sorrows have they brought on wretched Thebes!
How have I oft admired thy noble soul,

Worthy of empire! conqueror o'er thyself:
There first the hero shone, repressed his passion,
And the first tyrant he subdued was love.

PHILOCTETES.

There we must fly to conquer; I confess it:
Long time I strove, I felt my weakness long;
At length resolved to shun the fatal place,
I took a last farewell of my Jocaste.
The world then trembled at Alcides' name,
And on his valor did suspend their fate;
I joined the god-like man, partook his toils,
Marched by his side, and twined his laurel wreath
Round my own brows: then my enlightened soul
Against the passions armed, and rose superior.
A great man's friendship is the gift of heaven.
In him I read my duty and my fate;
I bound myself to virtue and to him:
My valor strengthened, and my heart improved,
Not hardened, I became like my Alcides.
What had I been without him! a king's son,
A common prince, the slave of every passion,
Which Hercules hath taught me to subdue.

DIMAS.

Now then unmoved thou canst behold Jocaste,
And her new husband.

PHILOCTETES.

Ha! another husband!
Saidst thou, another?

DIMAS.

Œdipus hath joined
To hers his future fate.

PHILOCTETES.

He is too happy;
But he is worthy: he who saved a kingdom
Alone can merit her, and heaven is just.

DIMAS.

He comes, and with him his assembled people;
Lo! the high-priest attends: this way they bend,
To deprecate the wrath of angry heaven.

PHILOCTETES.

It melts my soul; I weep for their misfortunes.
O Hercules, from thy eternal seat
Look down on thy afflicted country! hear
Thy fellow citizens! O hear thy friend,
Who joins his prayers, and be their guardian god!

SCENE II.

HIGH PRIEST, CHORUS.

FIRST PERSON OF THE CHORUS.

Ye blasting powers, who waste this wretched empire,
And breathe contagion, death, and horrors round us,
O quicken your slow wrath, be kind at last,
And urge our lingering fate.

SECOND PERSON OF THE CHORUS.

Strike, strike, ye gods,
Your victims are prepared; ye mountains, fall!
Crush us, ye heavens! O death, deliver us,
And we shall thank you for the boon.

HIGH PRIEST.

No more:
Cease your loud plaints, the wretch's poor resource;

Yield to the power supreme, who means to try
His people by affliction; with a word
He can destroy, and with a word can save:
He knows that death is here; the cries of Thebes
Have reached his throne. Behold! the king approaches,
And heaven by me declares its will divine;
The fates will soon to Œdipus unveil
Their mysteries all, and happier days succeed.

SCENE III.

ŒDIPUS, JOCASTE, HIGH PRIEST, ÆGINA, DIMAS, ARASPES, CHORUS.

ŒDIPUS.

O ye, who to this hallowed temple bring
The mournful offering of your tears: O what,
What shall I say to my afflicted people?
Would I could turn the wrath of angry heaven
Against myself, and quench the deadly flame?
But O! in universal ills like these,
Kings are but men, and only can partake
The common danger. Say, thou minister
Of the just gods, say, do they still refuse
To hear the voice of misery; still relentless
Will they behold us perish, are they deaf
And silent still?

HIGH PRIEST.

King, people, listen all:
This night did I behold the flame of heaven
Descending on our altars; to my eyes
The ghastly shade of Laius then appeared,
Indignant frowned upon me, and thus spoke

In fearful accents, terrible to hear:
"The death of Laius is still unrevenged,
The murderer lives in Thebes, and doth infect
The wholesome air with his malignant breath;
He must be known, he must be punished,
And on his fate depends the people's safety."

ŒDIPUS.

Justly ye suffer, Thebans, for this crime;
Laius was once your loved and honored king,
And your neglect hath from his manes drawn
This vengeance on you. Such is oft the fate
Of the best sovereigns; whilst they live, respect
Waits on their laws, their justice is admired,
And they like gods are served, like gods adored;
But after death they sink into oblivion.
No longer then your flattering incense burns:
The servile mind of wretched man still bends
To interest; and when virtue is departed,
'Tis soon forgotten: therefore doth the blood
Of murdered Laius now cry out against you,
And sues for vengeance to offended heaven.
To sprinkle on his tomb the murderer's blood
Will better far than slaughtered hecatombs
Appease his spirit: be it all our care
To seek the guilty wretch. Can none remember
Aught touching this sad deed? Amidst your signs
And wonders, could no footsteps e'er be traced
Of this unpunished crime? They always told me
It was a Theban, who against his prince
Uplifted his rebellious hand. For me [*To Jocaste.*
Who from thy hands received the crown, two years
After the death of Laius did I mount
The throne of Thebes, and never since that hour
Would I recall the subject of thy tears,
But in respectful silence waited still;

Still have thy dangers busied all my soul,
Nor left me time to think on aught but thee.

JOCASTE.

When fate, which had reserved me for thy arms,
Deprived me of my late unhappy lord,
Who, journeying o'er his kingdom's frontiers, fell
By base assassins, Phorbas then alone
Attended him, his loved and valued friend;
To whom the king, relying on his wisdom,
Entrusted half his power: he brought to Thebes
The mangled corpse: himself half dead with wounds,
And bathed in blood, fell at Jocaste's feet;
"Villains unknown," he cried, "have slain the king;
These eyes beheld it: I was dying too,
But heaven hath restored me to prolong
A wretched life." He said no more. My soul
Distracted saw the melancholy truth
Was still concealed; and therefore heaven perhaps
Concealed the murderer too; perhaps accomplished
Its own eternal will, and made us guilty,
That it might punish. Soon the sphinx appeared,
And laid our country waste: then hapless Thebes,
Attentive to her safety, could not think
On Laius' fate, whilst trembling for her own.

ŒDIPUS.

Where is that faithful Phorbas? lives he still?

JOCASTE.

Alas! his zeal and service ill repaid,
Too powerful to be loved, the jealous state
His secret foe, nobles and people joined
To punish him for past felicity.
The multitude accused him, even demanded

Of me his death: sore pressed on every side,
I knew not how to pardon or condemn,
But to a neighboring castle I conveyed him,
And hid the guiltless victim from their rage.
There four long winters hath the poor old man,
To future favorites a sad example,
Without a murmur or complaint remained,
And hopes from innocence alone release.

ŒDIPUS.

It is enough, Jocaste. Fly, begone,
[*To his servants.*
Open the prison, bring him hither straight,
We will examine him before you all;
Laius and Thebes shall be avenged together:
Yes, we will hear and judge, will sound the depth
Of this strange mystery. Ye gods of Thebes,
Who hear our prayers, and know the murderer, now
Reveal, and punish; and thou, Sun, withhold
From his dark eyes thy blessed light! proscribed,
Abandoned, let him wander o'er the earth
A wretched miscreant, by his sons abhorred,
And to his mother horrible! deprived
Of burial, let his body be the prey
Of hungry vultures!

HIGH PRIEST.

In these execrations
We all unite.

ŒDIPUS.

Gods! let the guilty suffer,
And they alone! or if the high decrees
Of your eternal justice leave to me
His punishment, at least indulgent grant,
Where you command, the power to obey;

If you pursue the guilty, O complete
The glorious work, and make the victim known!
[*To the people.*
Return, my people, to the temple; there
Once more entreat the gods: perhaps your prayers
May from their heavenly mansions draw them down
To dwell among us: if they loved the king,
They will avenge his death, and kind to him
Who errs unknowing, will direct this arm
For justice raised, and teach me where to strike.

The End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

JOCASTE, ÆGINA, ARASPES, CHORUS.

ARASPES.

Believe me, 'tis too true, my royal mistress,
Your dying people, with one common voice,
Accuse the hapless Philoctetes: fate
Hath sent him back to save this wretched kingdom.

JOCASTE

What do I hear, ye powers?

ÆGINA.

'Tis wonderful.

JOCASTE.

Who? Philoctetes?

ARASPES.

Yes, it must be he:
To whom can we impute it but to him?
When last at Thebes, he seemed to meditate
A deed like this; for much he hated Laius:

From Œdipus his traitorous purpose scarce
Could he conceal; for soon unwary youth
Betrays itself: soon through the thin disguise
Of ill dissembled loyalty, we saw
The rancor of his heart. I know not what
Provoked him, but too warm and open, ever
The slave of passion, he would kindle oft
At the king's name, and often pour forth threats
Of vengeance: for some time he left the kingdom,
But fate soon brought the restless wanderer back;
And at that fatal time, which heaven distinguished
By the detested shocking parricide,
He was at Thebes: e'er since that dreadful hour,
Suspicion justly falls on Philoctetes:
But the high name which he had gained in war,
His boasted title of earth's great avenger,
And his heroic deeds, have stopped the tongue
Of clamor, and suspended yet the stroke
Of our resentment. Now the time is come
When Thebes shall think no more of vain respect;
His glory and his conquests plead no more;
The hearts of an oppressed people groan;
The gods require his blood, and must be heard.

CHORUS.

O queen! have pity on a wretched people,
Who love and honor thee, revere the gods,
And follow their example; yield up to us
Their victim, and present our vows to heaven;
For heaven will hear them, if they come from thee.

JOCASTE.

O! if my life can mitigate its wrath,
I give it freely; take the sacrifice;
Accept my blood; but O! demand no more.
Thebans, be gone.

SCENE II.

JOCASTE, ÆGINA.

ÆGINA.

How I lament thy fate!

JOCASTE.

Alas! I envy those whom death has freed
From all their cares: but what remains for me,
What pain and torment to a virtuous heart!

ÆGINA.

'Tis terrible indeed: the clamorous people,
Warmed with false zeal, will cry aloud for vengeance,
And soon demand their victim. I forbear
To accuse him; but if he at last should prove
The murderer of thy unhappy lord,
How it must shock thy soul!

JOCASTE.

Impossible!
Such guilt and baseness never dwelt in him.
O my Ægina! since our bonds of love
Were disunited, naught has pierced my heart
Like this suspicion: this alone was wanting
To make Jocaste most completely wretched:
But I'll not bear to hear him thus accused;
I loved him, and he must be innocent.

ÆGINA.

That constant love ——

JOCASTE.

Nay, think not that my heart
Still nourishes a guilty passion for him;
I conquered that long since; yet, dear Ægina,
Howe'er the soul may act which virtue guides,
Its secret motions, nature's children, still
Must force their way: they will not be subdued,
But in the folds and windings of the heart,
Lurk still, and rush upon us; hid in fires
We thought extinguished, from their ashes rise:
In the hard conflict, rigid virtue may
Resist the passions, but can ne'er destroy them.

ÆGINA.

How just, and yet how noble is thy grief!
Such sentiments!——

JOCASTE.

Jocaste is most wretched;
Thou knowest my miseries, and thou knowest my heart,
Ægina: twice hath Hymen lit his torch
For me, and twice hath changed my slavery,
For such it was; the only man I loved,
Torn from my arms. Forgive me, ye just gods,
The sad remembrance of a conquered passion.
Ægina, thou wert witness of our loves,
Those ties, alas! dissolved as soon as made:
Then Œdipus, my sovereign, sought and gained me,
Spite of myself. I took the diadem,
Begirt with sorrows. To forget the past
Became my duty then; and I obeyed.
Thou knowest I stifled every tender thought
Of my first love, disguised an aching heart,
Drank up my tears, and even from myself
Strove to conceal my griefs.

ÆGINA.

How could you venture
The dangerous trial of a second marriage?

JOCASTE.

Alas!

ÆGINA.

Will you forgive me? shall I speak?

JOCASTE.

Thou mayest.

ÆGINA.

The king, the conqueror subdued thee:
You gave your hand as a reward to him
Who saved your country.

JOCASTE.

Gracious gods!

ÆGINA.

Was he
Happier than Laius? Was your Philoctetes
Forgotten then, or did they share your heart?

JOCASTE.

Thebes, by a cruel monster then laid waste,
Had promised its deliverer my hand;
The conqueror of the sphinx was worthy of me.

ÆGINA.

You loved him then?

JOCASTE.

I felt some tenderness
For Œdipus; but O! 'twas far from love:
'Twas not, Ægina, that tumultuous passion,
The impetuous offspring of my ravished senses,
Not the fierce flame that burned for Philoctetes;

Who, by his fatal charms, subdued my reason,
And poured love's sweetest poison o'er my heart:
Friendship sincere was all I could bestow
On Œdipus, for much I prized his virtue;
And pleased, beheld him mount the throne of Thebes
Which he had saved; but, whilst I followed him,
Even at the altar, my affrighted soul,
Wherefore I knew not, was most strangely moved,
And I retired with horror to his arms.
To this a dreadful omen did succeed:
Methought, Ægina, in the dead of night,
I saw the gulf of hell yawn wide before me;
When lo! the spirit of my murdered lord,
Bloody and pale, with threatening aspect stood,
And pointed to my son; that son, Ægina,
Which I to Laius bore, and to the gods
Offered, a cruel pious sacrifice.
They beckoned me to follow them, and seemed
To drag me with them to the horrid gloom
Of Tartarus: my troubled soul long kept
The sad idea, and must keep it ever.
Now Philoctetes doubles every woe.

ÆGINA.

I heard a noise that way, and, see he comes.

JOCASTE.

'Tis he; I tremble: but I will avoid him.

SCENE III.

JOCASTE, PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

Do not avoid me, do not fly, Jocaste,
From Philoctetes; turn, and look upon me:

O speak to me, nor fear my jealous tears
Should interrupt the new-born happiness
Of thy late nuptials: think not that I came
To cast reproaches on thee, or with sighs
To win thy lost affection; vulgar arts,
Unworthy of us both! the heart, Jocaste,
That burned for thee, and if I may recall
Thy plighted faith, was once not hateful to thee,
Has learned, from thy example, not to feel
Weakness like that.

JOCASTE.

I must approve thy conduct,
And 'tis but fit I vindicate my own:
I loved thee, Philoctetes; but my fate
Tore me from thee, and gave me to another.
Thou knowest what woes the horrid sphinx, by heaven
Appointed to afflict us, brought on Thebes:
Too well thou knowest that Œdipus——

PHILOCTETES.

Is thine;
I know it, and is worthy of the blessing:
Young as he was, his wisdom saved thy country;
His virtues, his fair deeds, and what still more
Exalted him, Jocaste's love, have ranked
Thy Œdipus among the first of men.
Wherefore did cruel fortune, still resolved
To punish Philoctetes, drive me hence,
To seek vain trophies in a distant land?
O! if the conqueror of the sphinx was doomed
To conquer thee, why was not I at Thebes?
I'd not have labored in the fruitless search
Of idle mysteries, wrapped in words of darkness;
This arm, to conquest long beneath thy smiles
Accustomed, should have drawn the vengeful sword,

And laid the howling monster at thy feet.
But O! a happier arm has wrested from me
That noblest triumph, and deserved Jocaste.

JOCASTE.

Alas! thou knowest not yet what ills await thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Thee and Alcides I have lost already:
Is there aught more to fear?

JOCASTE.

Thou dwellest at Thebes;
The detestation of avenging gods;
The baneful pestilence stalks forth amongst us;
The blood of Laius cries aloud, and heaven
Pursues us still: the murderer must bleed;
He has been sought for; some have dared to say
That he is found, and call him Philoctetes.

PHILOCTETES.

Astonishment! the base suspicion shocks
My soul, and bids my tongue be silent ever
On the opprobrious theme: accused of murder!
Murdering thy husband! thou canst never believe it.

JOCASTE.

O! never! 'twere injurious to thy honor
To combat such imposture, or refute
The vile aspersion; no, thou knowest my heart,
Thou hadst my love, and couldst not do a deed
Unworthy of it. Let them perish all,
These worthless Thebans, who deserve their fate
For thus suspecting thee: but, hence! begone!
Our vows are fruitless: heaven reserves for thee
Superior blessings. Thou wert born to serve
The gods, whose wisdom would not bury here

Virtues like thine, or suffer love to rule
A heart designed for universal sway,
And courage fit to save and bless mankind.
Ill would it suit the follower of Alcides
To lose his moments in the fond concerns,
The little cares of love. Thy hours are due
To the unhappy and the injured: they
Will all thy time and all thy virtue claim.
Already tyrants throng on every side;
Alcides dead, new monsters rise; go, thou,
And give the world another Hercules.
Œdipus comes; permit me to retire;
Not that I fear the weakness of my heart,
But as Jocaste loved thee once, and he
Is now my husband, I should blush before you.

SCENE IV.

ŒDIPUS, PHILOCTETES, ARASPES.

ŒDIPUS.

Sayst thou, Araspes, is he here, the prince,
The noble Philoctetes?

PHILOCTETES.

Yes; 'tis he;
Led by blind fortune to this hapless clime,
Where angry heaven hath made me suffer wrongs
I am not used to bear. I know the crimes
Laid to my charge; but think not that I mean
To justify myself: too well I know thee
To think that Œdipus would ever stoop
To such low mean suspicions: no! thy fame
Is mixed with mine; in the same steps of honor
We trod together. Theseus, Hercules,

And Philoctetes, pointed out to thee
The paths of glory; do not then disgrace
Their names, and taint thy own, by calumny,
But keep their bright examples still before thee.

ŒDIPUS.

All that I wish is but to save my country,
And if I can be useful to mankind,
This is the ambition I would satisfy,
And this the lesson which those heroes taught,
Whom thou hast followed, and whom I admire.
I meant not to accuse thee: had I chose
The people's victim, it had been myself.
I think it but the duty of a king
To perish for his country: 'tis an honor
Too great for common men. Then had I saved
Once more my Thebans, yielded up my life,
And sheltered thine: but 'twas not in my power.
The blood of guilt must flow, thou standest accused.
Defend thyself: if thou art innocent,
None shall rejoice so much as Œdipus;
Nor as a criminal shall then receive thee,
But as my noble friend, as Philoctetes.

PHILOCTETES.

I thought myself, indeed, above suspicion:
From many a base assassin has this arm,
While Jove's dread thunder slept, relieved mankind.
Whom we chastise, we seldom imitate.

ŒDIPUS.

I do not think thou wouldst disgrace thy name,
And thy fair martial deeds, by such a crime.
If Laius fell by thee, he fell with honor,
I doubt it not, for I must do thee justice.

PHILOCTETES.

If I had slain him, I had only gained
One added triumph. Kings, indeed, are gods
To their own subjects, but to Hercules,
Or me, they were no more than common men.
I have avenged the wrongs of mighty princes;
And, therefore, little, thou mayest think, should fear
To attack the bravest.

ŒDIPUS.

Heroes, like thyself,
Are equal even to kings, I know they are:
But still remember, prince, whoe'er slew Laius,
His head must answer for the woes of Thebes;
And thou ——

PHILOCTETES.

I slew him not; let that suffice.
If I had done the deed, I would have owned,
Nay boasted of it. Hear me, Œdipus,
Though vulgar souls, by vulgar methods, deign
To vindicate their injured honor; kings
And heroes, when they speak, expect, no doubt,
To be believed: perhaps thou dost suspect
I murdered Laius. It becomes not thee,
Of all men, to accuse me: to thy hand
Devolved his sceptre and his queen. Who reaped
The fruits of Laius's death, but Œdipus?
Who took the spoils? Who filled his throne? Not I.
That object never tempted Philoctetes:
Alcides never would accept a crown:
We knew no master, and desired no subjects:
I have made kings, but never wished to be one.
But 'tis beneath me to refute the falsehood,
For innocence is lessened by defence.

ŒDIPUS.

Thy pride offends me, whilst thy virtue charms.
If thou art guiltless, thou hast naught to fear
From justice and the laws; thy innocence
Will shine with double splendor: dwell with us,
And wait the event.

PHILOCTETES.

My honor is concerned,
And therefore I shall stay; nor hence depart
Till I have ample vengeance for the wrongs
Thy base suspicions cast on Philoctetes.

SCENE V.

ŒDIPUS, ARASPES.

ŒDIPUS.

Araspes, I can never think him guilty:
A heart like his, intrepid, brave, and fearless,
Could never stoop to mean disguise; nor thoughts
So noble e'er inspire the timid breast
Of falsehood: no! such baseness is far from him:
I even blushed to accuse him, and condemned
My own injustice: hard and cruel fate
Of royalty! alas! kings cannot read
The hearts of men, and oft on innocence,
Spite of ourselves unjust, inflict the pains
Due to the guilty. How this Phorbas lingers!
In him alone are all my hopes: the gods
Refuse to hear or answer to our vows;
Their silence shows how much they are offended.

ARASPES.

Rely then on thyself: the gods, whose aid
This priest hath promised, do not always dwell

Within their temples; tripods, caves, and cells,
The brazen mouths that pour forth oracles,
Which men had framed, by men may be inspired;
We must not rest our faith on priests alone;
Even in the sanctuary traitors oft
May lurk unseen, exert their pious arts
To enslave mankind, and bid the destinies
Speak or be silent just as they command them.
Search then, and find the truth, examine all;
Phorbas, and Philoctetes, and Jocaste.
Trust to yourself; let our own eyes determine;
Be they our tripods, oracles, and gods.

ŒDIPUS.

Within the temple, thinkest thou, perfidy
Like this can dwell: but if just heaven at last
Should fix our fate, and Œdipus be called
To execute its will, he will receive
The precious trust, the safety of his country,
Nor act unworthy of it. To the gods
Once more I go, and with incessant prayer
Will try to soothe their anger: thou, meantime,
If thou wouldst wish to serve me, hasten onward
The lingering Phorbas; in our hapless state,
I must enquire the truth of gods and men.

The End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

JOCASTE, ÆGINA.

JOCASTE.

Yes, my Ægina, I expect him here;
'Tis the last time these eyes shall e'er behold
The wretched Philoctetes.

ÆGINA.

Thou hast heard,
My royal mistress, to what desperate height
The clamorous people carry their resentment;
Our dying Thebans from his punishment
Expect their safety. Old men, women, children,
United by misfortunes, breathe forth vengeance;
Pronounce him guilty, and cry out that heaven
Demands his blood: canst thou resist the torrent,
Defend, or save him?

JOCASTE.

Yes: I will defend him;
Even though Thebes should lift the murderous hand
Against her queen, beneath her smoking walls
To crush Jocaste, ne'er would I betray
Such injured innocence; but still I fear
The tongue of slander: well thou knowest my heart
Once sighed for Philoctetes; now, Ægina,
Will they not say I sacrifice to him
My fame, my gods, my country, and my husband?
Will they not say Jocaste loves him still?

ÆGINA.

Calm thy vain fears; thy passion had no witness
But me, and never———

JOCASTE.

Thinkest thou that a princess
Can e'er conceal her hatred or her love?
O no! on every side the eager eyes
Of courtiers look upon us: through the veil
Of feigned respect, with subtle treachery
They search our hearts, and trace out every weakness.
Naught can escape their sharp malignant sight;

'A little word, a sigh, or glance betrays us;
Our very silence shall be made to speak
Our thoughts; and when their busy artifice,
Spite of ourselves, hath drawn the secret from us,
Then their loud censures cast invidious light
O'er all our actions, and the instructed world
Is quickly taught to echo every weakness.

ÆGINA.

But what hast thou to fear from calumny?
What piercing eye can wound Jocaste's fame?
Who knows thy love, will know thy conquest o'er it;
Will know thy virtue still supported thee.

JOCASTE.

It is that virtue which distresses me;
I look, perhaps, with too severe an eye
On my own weakness, and accuse myself
Unjustly; but the image still remains
Of Philoctetes, engraved within my heart
Too deep for time or virtue to efface it;
And much I doubt, if when I strive to save him,
I act not less from justice than from love:
My pity hath too much of tenderness;
I tremble oft, and oft reproach myself
For my fond care; I could be more his friend,
If he had been less dear to me.

ÆGINA.

But say,
Is it your will that he depart?

JOCASTE.

It is:
'And O! if he would listen to Jocaste,
Never return, never behold me more;
Fly from this fatal, this distressful scene,

And save my life and fame. But what detains him?
Why hastes he not? Ægina, fly—

SCENE II.

PHILOCTETES, ÆGINA, JOCASTE.

JOCASTE.

He's here.
O prince, my soul is on the rack; I blush
To see the man whom duty bids me shun,
Which says I should forget and not betray thee.
Doubtless thou knowest the dreadful fate that hangs
O'er thy devoted head.

PHILOCTETES.

The clamorous people
Demand my life; but they have suffered much,
And therefore, though unjust, I pity them.

JOCASTE.

Yield not thyself a victim to their rage:
Away, begone; as yet thou art thyself
The master of thy fate; but this perhaps
Is the last minute that can give me power
To save thee: far, O fly far from Jocaste;
And, in return for added life, I beg thee
But to forget 'twas I who thus preserved it.

PHILOCTETES.

I could have wished, Jocaste, thou hadst shown
More strength of mind, and less compassion for me;
Preferred with me my honor to my life,
And rather bade me die than meanly quit

My station here: I yet am innocent,
But in obeying thee I should be guilty.
Of all the blessings heaven bestowed upon me,
My honor and my fame alone remain
Untouched. O! do not rob me of a treasure
So precious to me; do not make me thus
Unworthy of Jocaste. I have lived,
Lived to fulfil the fate allotted to me;
Have passed my sacred word to Œdipus,
And whatsoever suspicions he may cherish,
I am a stranger to the breach of honor.

JOCASTE.

O Philoctetes, let me here entreat thee,
By the just gods, by that ill-fated passion,
Which once inspired thy breast, if aught remains
Of tender friendship, if thou still rememberest
How much my happiness on thine depended,
Deign to prolong a glorious life, and days
That should have been united with Jocaste.

PHILOCTETES.

To thee devoted I would have them still
In equal tenor flow, and worthy of thee;
I've lived far from thee, and shall die content,
If thy regard attends me to the tomb.
Who knows but heaven may yet refuse to see
This bloody sacrifice; perhaps, in mercy
It guided me to Thebes to save Jocaste;
Shortened my days, perhaps, to lengthen thine.
Happy event! the blood of innocence
May be accepted; mine is not unworthy.

SCENE III.

ŒDIPUS, JOCASTE, PHILOCTETES, ÆGINA, ARASPES, *with Attendants.*

ŒDIPUS.

Fear not the clamors of an idle crowd,
That rage tumultuous, and demand thy death:
Know, Philoctetes, I have calmed their rage
And will myself, if needful, be thy guard.
I judge not with the hasty multitude,
But wish to see thy innocence appear:
My doubtful mind, uncertain where to fix,
Nor dares or to condemn, or to acquit thee:
Heaven can alone determine all, which hears
My ardent prayer; at length it seems appeased,
And by its priest shall soon point out the victim.
The gods shall soon decide 'twixt Thebes and thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Great is thy love of truth, O king, but know
Justice extreme is height of injury;
We must not always hearken to the voice
Of rigor: honor is the first of laws,
Let us observe it. But thou seest me sunk
Beneath myself, answering the slandrous tongues
Of base defamers, whom I should despise.
O let not Œdipus unite with such
To ruin my fair fame! it is enough
That I deny it; 'tis enough to call
My life before thee. Let Alcides come,
And bring with him the monsters I destroyed,
The tyrants I subdued; let these stand forth
My witnesses, and let my enemies confute them.

But ask your priest whether his gods condemn me;
I'll wait their sentence; not because I fear it,
But to preserve thy persecuted people.

SCENE IV.

ŒDIPUS, JOCASTE, HIGH PRIEST, ARASPES, PHILOCTETES, ÆGINA, *Attendants*, CHORUS.

ŒDIPUS.

Will heaven at last indulgent to our prayers
Withdraw its vengeance? By what murderous hand
Was it offended?

PHILOCTETES.

Speak, whose blood must flow
For expiation?

HIGH PRIEST.

Fatal gift of heaven!
Unhappy knowledge! to what dangers oft
Dost thou betray the heart of curious man!
O would that fate, thus open to my view,
Had o'er its secrets drawn the eternal veil
To hide them from my sight!

PHILOCTETES.

What evil bringest thou?

ŒDIPUS.

Comest thou the minister of wrath divine?

PHILOCTETES.

Fear nothing.

ŒDIPUS.

Do the gods demand my life?

HIGH PRIEST.

If thou givest credit to me, ask me not.

ŒDIPUS.

Whatever be the fate which heaven decrees,
The safety of my country is concerned,
And I will know it.

PHILOCTETES.

Speak.

ŒDIPUS.

Have pity on us,
Pity the afflicted, pity———

HIGH PRIEST.

Œdipus
Deserves more, much more, pity than his people.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

Œdipus loves them with paternal fondness;
To his we join our prayers. O! hear us thou
Interpreter of heaven; now hear, and save!

SECOND PERSON OF THE CHORUS.

We die, O save us! turn aside the wrath
Of the angry gods; name the perfidious monster!

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

Name him, and soon the parricide shall die.

HIGH PRIEST.

Unhappy men! why will ye press me thus?

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

Speak but the word, he dies, and we are saved.

HIGH PRIEST.

O! ye will tremble but to hear his name,
When ye shall know what pangs he must endure.
The God, who speaks by me, in pity dooms him
To banishment alone; but dreadful ills
Await the murderer: driven to fell despair
His own rash hand shall to the wrath of heaven
Add woes more deep and heavier punishment:
Even you shall shudder at his fate, and own
Your safety purchased at a rate too dear.

ŒDIPUS.

Obey then.

PHILOCTETES.

Speak.

ŒDIPUS.

Still obstinate!

HIGH PRIEST.

Remember,
If I must speak, that thou didst force me to it.

ŒDIPUS.

Insufferable delay! I'll bear no more.

HIGH PRIEST.

Since thou wilt hear it then, 'tis—

ŒDIPUS.

Ha! speak, who?

HIGH PRIEST.

'Tis—Œdipus.

ŒDIPUS.

I?

HIGH PRIEST.

Thou, unhappy Prince,
Thou art the man.

SECOND PERSON OF THE CHORUS.

Alas! what do I hear!

JOCASTE.

Say, can it be, interpreter of heaven?
[*To Œdipus.*
Thou, Œdipus, the murderer of my husband!
To whom Jocaste yielded with herself
The throne of Thebes: the oracle is false;
I know it is; thy virtues must confute it.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

O! heaven, whose power decrees the fate of mortals,
O! name another, or to death devote us!

PHILOCTETES.

[*Turning to Œdipus.*
Think not I mean to render ill for ill;
Or from this strange reverse of fortune take
A mean advantage, to return the wrongs
I suffered from thy people and from thee:
No, Œdipus, I'll do thee noble justice,
That justice thou deniest to Philoctetes.
Spite of the gods, I think thee innocent,
And here I offer thee my willing hand
Against thy foes: I cannot hesitate
Which I should serve, a pontiff or a king.
'Tis a priest's business, whosoever he be,
By whatsoever deity inspired,
To pray for, not to curse, his royal master.

ŒDIPUS.

Transcendent virtue! execrable traitor!
Here I behold a demi-god, and there

A base impostor: see the glorious privilege
Of altars; thanks to their protecting veil,
With lips profane thou hast abused the power
Given thee by heaven, to arraign thy king;
And yet thou thinkest the sacred ministry
Thou hast disgraced shall withhold my wrath:
Traitor, thou shouldst have perished at the altar
Before those gods whose voice thou hast usurped.

HIGH PRIEST.

My life is in thy hands, and thou art now
The master of my fate: seize then the time
Whilst yet thou art so, for to-day thy doom
Will be pronounced. Tremble, unhappy Prince,
Thy reign is past; a hand unseen suspends
The fatal sword that glitters o'er thy head:
Soon shall thy conscious soul with horror feel
The weight of guilt; soon shalt thou quit the throne,
Where now thou sittest secure, to wander forth
A wretched exile in a distant land;
Of wholesome water and of sacred fire
Deprived, shalt take thy solitary way,
And to the caves and hollow rocks complain.
Where'er thou goest, a vengeful God shall still
Pursue thy steps; still shalt thou call on death,
But call in vain: heaven, that beholds thy fate,
Shall hide itself in darkness from thy sight;
To guilt and sorrow doomed, thou shall regret
Thy life, and wish that thou hadst ne'er been born.

ŒDIPUS.

Thus far I have constrained my wrath, and heard
thee.
Priest, if thy blood were worthy of my sword,
Thy life should answer for this insolence:

But hence, begone, nor urge my temper further,
Thou author of abominable falsehood.

HIGH PRIEST.

Thou callest me hypocrite, and base impostor;
Thy father thought not so.

ŒDIPUS.

Who? Polybus?
My father, saidst thou?

HIGH PRIEST.

Thou wilt know too soon
Thy wretched fate: to-day shall give thee birth;
To-day shall give thee death: unhappy man,
Tell me who gave thee birth, or say with whom
Thou livest, beset with sorrows and with crimes
For thee alone reserved. O Corinth! Phocis!
Detested nuptials! impious wretched race,
Too like its parent stem! whose deadly rage
Shall fill the world with horror and amaze.
Farewell.

SCENE V.

ŒDIPUS, PHILOCTETES, JOCASTE.

ŒDIPUS.

His last words fix me to the earth
Immovable; my passion is subsided;
I know not where I am: methinks some god
Descended from above to calm my rage;
Who to his priest imparted power divine,
And by his sacred voice pronounced my ruin.

PHILOCTETES.

If thou hadst naught to oppose but king to king,
I would have fought for Œdipus; but know
That Priests are here more formidable foes,
Because respected, feared and honored more.
Supported by his oracles, the priest
Shall often make his sovereign crouch beneath him;
Whilst his weak people, dragged in holy chains,
Embrace the idol, tread on sacred laws
With pious zeal, and think they honor heaven
When they betray their master and their king,
But above all, when interest, fruitful parent
Of riot and licentiousness, increase
Their impious rage, and back their insolence.

ŒDIPUS.

Alas! thy virtue doubles all my woes,
For great as my misfortunes is thy soul;
Beneath the weight of care that hangs upon me;
Who strives to comfort can but more oppress.
What voice is this which from my inmost soul
Pours forth complaints? What crime have I committed?
Say, vengeful gods, is Œdipus so guilty?

JOCASTE.

Talk not of guilt, my lord, your dying people
Demand a victim; we must save our country;
Delay it not: I was the wife of Laius,
And I alone should perish: let me seek
The wandering spirit of my murdered lord
On the infernal shore, and calm his rage:
Yes, I will go: may the kind gods accept
My life and ask no other sacrifice!
May thy Jocaste save her Œdipus!

ŒDIPUS.

And wouldest thou die! are there not woes enough
Heaped on this head? O cease, my loved Jocaste,
This mournful language, I am sunk already
Too deep in grief without new miseries,
Without thy death to fill my cup of sorrow.
Let us go in: I must clear up a doubt
Too justly formed, I fear: but follow me.

JOCASTE.

How couldst thou ever, my lord——

ŒDIPUS.

No more: come in,
And there confirm my terrors, or remove them.

The End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

ŒDIPUS, JOCASTE.

ŒDIPUS.

Jocaste, 'tis in vain: say what thou wilt,
These terrible suspicions haunt me still;
The priest affrights me; I acquit him now,
And even, in secret, am my own accuser.
O! I have asked myself some dreadful questions;
A thousand strange events, which form my mind
Were long effaced, now rush in crowds upon me,
And harrow up my soul; the past obstructs,
The present but confounds me, and the future
Is big with horrid truths; on every side
Guilt waits my footsteps.

JOCASTE.

Will not virtue guard thee?
Art thou not sure that thou art innocent?

ŒDIPUS.

We're oft more guilty than we think we are.

JOCASTE.

Disdain the madness of a talking priest,
Nor thus excuse him with unmanly fears.

ŒDIPUS.

Now in the name of the unhappy king,
And angry heaven, let me entreat thee, say,
When Laius undertook that fatal journey,
Did guards attend him?

JOCASTE.

I've already told thee,
One followed him alone.

ŒDIPUS.

And only one?

JOCASTE.

Superior even to the rank he bore,
He was a king, who, like thyself, disdained
All irksome pomp, and never would permit
An idle train of slaves to march before him.
Amidst his happy subjects fearless still,
And still unguarded lived in peace and safety,
And thought his people's love his best defence.

ŒDIPUS.

Thou best of kings, sent by indulgent heaven
To mortals here; thou exemplary greatness!
Could ever Œdipus his barbarous hand

Lift against thee? but if thou canst, Jocaste,
Describe him to me.

JOCASTE.

Since thou wilt recall
The sad remembrance, hear what Laius was:
Spite of the frost which hoary age had spread
O'er his fair temples in declining age,
Which yet was vigorous, his eyes sparkled still
With all the fire of youth, his wrinkled forehead
Beneath, his silver locks attracted awe
And reverence from mankind: if I may dare
To say it, Laius much resembled thee;
With pleasure I behold in Œdipus
His virtues and his features thus united.
What have I said to alarm thee thus?——

ŒDIPUS.

I see
Some strange misfortune will o'ertake me soon;
The priest, I fear, was by the gods inspired,
And but too truly hath foretold my fate:
Could I do this, and was it possible?

JOCASTE.

Are then these holy instruments of heaven
Infallible? Their ministry indeed
Binds them to the altar, they approach the gods,
But they are mortals still; and thinkest thou then
Truth is dependent on the flight of birds?
Thinkest thou, expiring by the sacred knife,
The groaning heifer shall for them alone
Remove the veil of dark futurity?
Or the gay victims, crowned with flowery garlands,
Within their entrails bear the fates of men?
O no! to search for truth by ways like these
Is to usurp the rights of power supreme;

These priests are not what the vile rabble think them,
Their knowledge springs from our credulity.

ŒDIPUS.

Would it were so! for then I might be happy.

JOCASTE.

It is: alas! my griefs bear witness to it.
Once I was partial to them like thyself,
But undeceived at length lament my folly;
Heaven hath chastised me for my easy faith
In dark mysterious lying oracles,
That robbed me of my child; I hate the base
Deluders all; had it not been for them,
My son had still been living.

ŒDIPUS.

Ha! thy son!
How didst thou lose him? By what oracles
Did the gods speak concerning him?

JOCASTE.

I'll tell thee
What from myself I would have gladly hidden.
But 'twas a false one; therefore be not moved.
Thou must have heard I had a son by Laius.
A mother's fond disquietude provoked me
To ask his fate of the great oracle.
Alas! what madness 'tis to wrest from heaven
Those secrets which it kindly would conceal:
But I was a weak woman, and a mother.
Before the priestess' feet I fell submissive,
And thus her answer was; for O, too well
I must remember what but to repeat
Now makes me tremble; but thou wilt forgive me:
"Thy son shall slay his father, sacrilegious,
Incestuous parricide." Shall I go on?

ŒDIPUS.

Well, very well———

JOCASTE.

In short, it then foretold me,
This son, this monster should pollute my bed;
That I, his mother, should embrace my son,
Just recent from the murder of his father.
That thus united by these dreadful ties,
I should bear children to this hapless child.
You seem to be disordered at my story,
And dread perhaps to hear the sad remainder.

ŒDIPUS.

Proceed: what did you with the wretched infant,
Object of wrath divine?

JOCASTE.

Believed the gods;
Piously cruel, sacrificed my child,
And stifled all a mother's tenderness:
In vain the clamors of parental love
Condemned the rigid laws of partial heaven:
Alas! I meant to save the tender victim
From his hard fate that threatened future guilt,
And doomed him to involuntary crimes:
I thought to triumph o'er the oracle,
And in compassion gave him up to death.
Cruel compassion, and destructive too!
Deceitful darkness of a false prediction!
What did I reap from my inhuman care,
Did it prolong my wretched husband's life?
Alas! cut off in full prosperity,
He fell by the unknown hands of base assassins,
Not by his son. Thus were they both torn from me:
I lost my child, and could not save his father.

By my example taught, avoid my errors,
Banish these idle fears, and calm thy soul.

ŒDIPUS.

After the dreadful secret thou hast told me,
It were not fit I should conceal my own:
Hear then my tale; perchance when thou shalt know
The sad relation, which they bear each other,
Thou too wilt tremble: Born the natural heir
To Corinth's throne, from Corinth far removed,
I look with horror on my native land:
One day—that fatal day I well remember,
For O! 'tis ever present to my thoughts,
And dreadful to my soul—my youthful hands.
For the first time their solemn gift prepared
An offering to the gods, when lo! the gates
Throughout the temple on a sudden stood
Self-opened, and the pillars streamed with blood;
The altars shook; a hand invisible
Threw back my offerings, and in thunder thus
A horrid voice addressed me: "Come not here,
Stain not the holy threshold with thy feet,
The gods have from the living cut thee off
Indignant, nor will e'er accept thy gifts;
Go, take thy offerings to the furies, seek
The serpents that stand ready to devour thee;
These are thy gods, begone, and worship them."
While terror seized me at these dreadful words,
Again the voice alarmed me; and foretold
All those sad crimes which heaven to thee denounced
Against thy son; said, I should slay my father,
O gods! and be the husband of my mother.

JOCASTE.

Where am I? what malicious dæmon joined
Our hands, to make us thus supremely wretched?

ŒDIPUS.

Reserve thy tears for something still more dreadful;
Now list and tremble: fearful of myself,
Lest I should e'er fulfil the dire prediction,
Or oppose heaven, I left my native land,
Broke from the arms of a distracted mother,
Wandered from place to place, disguised my birth,
My family, and name, by one kind friend
Attended; yet, in my disastrous journey,
The God who guided my sad footsteps oft
Strengthened my arm, and crowned me with success:
But happier had it been for Œdipus,
If he had fallen with glory in the field,
And by his death prevented all his woes:
I was reserved to be a parricide:
The hand of heaven, so long suspended o'er me,
Hath from my eyes at length removed the veil
Of Ignorance, and now I see it all:
I do remember, in the fields of Phocis
(Nor know I how I could so long forget
The great event) that in a narrow way
I met two warriors in a splendid car:
The path was strait, and we disputed it:
An idle contest for us both; but I
Was young and haughty, from my earliest years
Bred up to pride that flowed in with my blood;
An unknown stranger in a foreign land,
I thought myself upon my father's throne,
And whomso'er I chanced to meet, esteemed
As my own vassals, born but to obey me:
I rushed upon them, and with furious arm
Their rapid coursers stopped in full career;
Hurled from their chariot the intrepid pair,
Forward advanced in rage, and both attacked me:

The combat was not long, for victory soon
Declared for Œdipus. Immortal powers!
Whether from hatred or from love I know not,
But surely on that day ye fought for me.
I saw them both expiring at my feet,
And one of them, I do remember well,
Who seemed in age well-stricken, as he lay
Gasping on the earth, looked earnestly upon me,
Held out his arms, and would have spoke: I saw
The tears flow plenteous from his half-closed eyes:
Methought when I did wound him my shocked soul,
All conqueror as I was—you shake, Jocaste.

JOCASTE.

My lord, see Phorbas comes; this way they lead him.

ŒDIPUS.

'Tis well: my doubts will then be satisfied.

SCENE II.

ŒDIPUS, JOCASTE, PHORBAS, *Attendants.*

ŒDIPUS.

Come hither, thou unfortunate old man;
The sight of him alarms my conscious soul;
Confused remembrance tortures me; I dread
To look on, or to question him.

PHORBAS.

O queen,
Is this the day appointed for my death;
Hast thou decreed it? Never but to me
Wert thou unjust.

JOCASTE.

Fear not, but hear the king,
And answer him.

PHORBAS.

The king?

JOCASTE.

Thou standest before him.

PHORBAS.

Ye gods! is this the successor of Laius?

ŒDIPUS.

Waste not the time thus idly, but inform me,
Thou wert the only witness of his death,
And wounded, so 'tis said, in his defence.

PHORBAS.

He's dead, and let his ashes rest in peace;
Embitter not my fate, nor thus insult
A faithful subject wounded by thy hand.

ŒDIPUS.

I wound thee? I?

PHORBAS.

Now satiate thy revenge,
And put an end to this unhappy life;
The poor remains of blood which then escaped thee
Now thou mayest shed; and since thou must remember
The fatal place where Laius———

ŒDIPUS.

Spare the rest:
It is enough: I see it now: 'twas I:
Ye gods! my eyes are opened.

JOCASTE.

Can it be?

ŒDIPUS.

And art thou he whom my unhappy rage
Attacked at Daulis in the narrow path?
O yes it is, must be so: in vain myself
Would I deceive, all speaks too plain against me,
I know thee but too well.

PHORBAS.

I saw him fall,
My royal master fall beneath thy hand:
Thou didst the crime, and I have suffered for it:
A prison was my fate, and thine a throne.

ŒDIPUS.

Away: I soon shall do thee ample justice,
Thee and myself; leave then to me the care
Of my own punishment: begone, and save me
At least the painful sight of innocence,
Which I have made unhappy.

SCENE III.

ŒDIPUS, JOCASTE.

ŒDIPUS.

O Jocaste!
For cruel fate forbids me ever more
To call thee by the tender name of wife;
Thou seest my crimes; no longer bound to love;
Strike now, and free thyself from the dread thought
Of being mine.

JOCASTE.

Alas!

ŒDIPUS.

Take, take this sword,
The instrument of my unhappy rage;
Receive, and use it for a noble purpose,
And plunge it in my breast.

JOCASTE.

What wouldst thou do!
O stop thy furious grief, be calm, and live.

ŒDIPUS.

Canst thou have pity on a wretch like me?
No, I must die.

JOCASTE.

Thou must not: hear Jocaste,
O hear her prayers!

ŒDIPUS.

I will not, must not hear thee.
I slew thy husband.

JOCASTE.

And thou gavest me one.

ŒDIPUS.

I did, but 'twas by guilt.

JOCASTE.

Involuntary.

ŒDIPUS.

No matter, still 'twas guilt.

JOCASTE.

O height of woe!

ŒDIPUS.

O fatal nuptials! once such envied bliss!

JOCASTE.

Such be it still, for still thou art my husband.

ŒDIPUS.

O no! I am not; this destructive hand
Hath broke the sacred tie, and deep involved
Thy kingdom in my ruin. O! avoid me,
Fear the vindictive God who still pursues
The wretched Œdipus; I fear myself,
My timid virtue serves but to confound me;
Perhaps my fate may reach even thee, Jocaste;
Pity thyself, pity the hapless victims
That perish daily for my guilt; O strike,
And save thy Œdipus from future crimes.

JOCASTE.

Do not accuse, do not condemn thyself;
Thou art unhappy, but thou art not guilty:
Thou didst not know whose blood thy hand had shed
In Daulis' fatal conflict; when remembrance
Calls forth the melancholy deed, I must
Weep for myself, but should not punish thee.
Live therefore———

ŒDIPUS.

No; it is impossible:
Farewell, Jocaste! whither must I go,
O whither must I drag this hateful being?
What clime accursed, or what disastrous shore
Shall hide my crimes, and bury my despair?
Still must I wander on from clime to clime,
Or rise by murder to another throne?
Shall I to Corinth bend my way, where fate

Hath heavier crimes in store for Œdipus?
O Corinth! ne'er on thy detested borders———

SCENE IV.

ŒDIPUS, JOCASTE, DIMAS.

DIMAS.

My lord, this moment is arrived a stranger,
He says, from Corinth, and desires admittance.

ŒDIPUS.

I'll go and meet him——fare thee well, Jocaste:
But stop thy tears; no more shalt thou behold
The wretched Œdipus; it is determined:
My reign is past; thou hast no husband now,
I am no more a sovereign, nor Jocaste's.
Oppressed with ills I go, in search of climes,
Where far removed from thee and from my country,
I still may act as shall become a king,
Worthy of thee, and justify the tears
Thou sheddest for Œdipus: farewell! forever.

The End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

ŒDIPUS, ARASPES, DIMAS, *Attendants.*

ŒDIPUS.

Weep not for me, my friends, nor thus regret
Your sovereign's fate: I wish for banishment;
To me 'tis pleasure; for I know 'twill make
My people happy: you must lose your king,

But shall preserve his country. When I first
Came to the throne of Thebes, I served it well;
And, as I mounted, now I shall descend
In glory: honor shall attend my fall:
I leave my country, kingdom, children, all.
Then hear me now, hear my last parting words;
A king you must have; let him be my choice;
Take Philoctetes: he is generous, noble,
Virtuous, and brave; his father was a king,
And he the friend of Hercules; let him
Succeed me: I must hence.—Go, search out Phorbas;
Bid him not fear, but come this moment hither,
I must bequeath him something; he deserves it:
I'll take my farewell as a monarch ought.
Go, bring the stranger to me—stay ye here.

SCENE II.

ŒDIPUS, ARASPES, ICARUS, *Attendants.*

ŒDIPUS.

Ha! is it thou, my much-loved Icarus!
The faithful guardian of my infant years,
Favorite and friend of Polybus, my father,
What brought thee hither?

ICARUS.

Polybus is dead.

ŒDIPUS.

Alas? my father!

ICARUS.

'Twas what we expected;
For he had filled the measure of his days,
And died in good old age; these eyes beheld it.

Where are ye now, mistaken oracles!
That shook my timid virtue, and foretold
That I should prove a guilty parricide?
My father's dead, ye meant but to deceive me;
These hands are not polluted with his blood:
The slave of error, I have wandered long
In darkness, busied in a fruitless toil,
And to remove imaginary ills,
Have made my life a scene of real woes,
The offspring of my fond credulity.
How deep must be the color of my fate
When miseries like this can bring relief!
Bliss spring from sorrow, and a father's death
Shall be accepted as the gift of heaven!
But I must hence, and to his ashes pay
The tribute due:—ha! silent, and in tears!

ICARUS.

Ought I to speak? O heaven!

ŒDIPUS.

Hast thou aught more
Of ill to tell me?

ICARUS.

For a moment grant me
Your private ear.

ŒDIPUS.

Retire.—[*To the attendants.*
What can this mean?

ICARUS.

Think not of Corinth: thither, if thou goest,
Thy death is certain.

ŒDIPUS.

Who shall banish me
From my own kingdom?

ICARUS.

To the throne of Corinth
Another heir succeeds.

ŒDIPUS.

Ye gods! is this
The last sad stroke which I am born to suffer,
Or will ye still pursue me? Fate, go on
And persecute, thou shalt not conquer me:
Let us away to my rebellious subjects,
I'll go to be their scourge, if not their king,
And find at least an honorable death.
But say, what stranger has usurped my throne?

ICARUS.

He is the son-in-law of Polybus,
Who on his head did place the diadem
In his last moments; the obedient people
Hail their new sovereign.

ŒDIPUS.

Has my father too
Betrayed me, sided with my faithless subjects,
And drove me from my throne?

ICARUS.

He did but justice,
For thou wert not his son.

ŒDIPUS.

Ha! Icarus!

ICARUS.

With terror and regret I must reveal
The dreadful secret, Corinth——

ŒDIPUS.

Not his son!

ICARUS.

Thou art not. Polybus, oppressed by conscience,
Dying declared it; to the royal blood
Of Corinth's kings he yielded up his throne:
I who alone enjoyed his confidence,
And therefore dreaded the new sovereign's power,
Fled to implore thy aid.

ŒDIPUS.

Who am I then,
If not the son of Polybus?

ICARUS.

The gods,
Who trusted to my hands thy infant years,
In shades of darkest night conceal thy birth;
I only know, that soon as born condemned
To death, and on a desert hill exposed,
Thou but for me hadst perished.

ŒDIPUS.

Thus with life
Began my sorrows, a detested object
Even from my cradle, and accursed by all.
Where didst thou light on me?

ICARUS.

On mount Citheron,

ŒDIPUS.

Near Thebes?

ICARUS.

In that deserted place, a Theban,
Who called himself thy father, left thee; there
To perish: some kind God conducted me
That way; I pitied, took thee in my arms,
Revived, and cherished thee: to Corinth then
Carried my little charge, and to the king
Presented thee; who, mark thy wondrous fate!
His child just dead, adopted thee his son,
And by that stroke of policy confirmed
His tottering power: As son of Polybus
Thou wert brought up by him who had preserved thee:
The throne of Corinth never was thy right,
But conscience robbed thee of what chance bestowed.

ŒDIPUS.

Immortal powers, who rule the fate of kings!
Am I thus doomed in one unhappy day
To suffer such variety of woe!
On a frail mortal shall your miracles
Be thus exhausted! But inform me, friend,
This old man, from whose hands you took me, say,
Hast thou beheld him since that fatal hour?

ICARUS.

Never: perhaps he's dead, he who alone
Could tell thee the strange secret of thy birth;
But on my mind his image is engraved
So deeply, I should know him well.

ŒDIPUS.

Alas!
Wretch that I am! why should I wish to find him?
Rather, submissive to the will of heaven
Should I keep close the veil that o'er my eyes

Spreads its benignant shade: too well already
I see my fate; more knowledge would but show
New horrors; and yet, spite of all my woes,
Urged on by fatal curiosity,
I thirst for more: I cannot bear to rest
In sad suspense: to doubt is to be wretched:
I dread the torch that lights me to my ruin:
I fear to know myself, yet cannot long
Remain unknown.

SCENE III.

ŒDIPUS, ICARUS, PHORBAS.

ŒDIPUS.

Ha! Phorbas! come this way.

ICARUS.

Surprising! sure the more I look, the more——
'Tis he, my lord, it must be he.

PHORBAS.

Forgive me [*To Icarus*
If still that face unknown——

ICARUS.

Dost thou remember?
On mount Citheron——

PHORBAS.

How!

ICARUS.

The child you gave me,
The child to death——

PHORBAS.

What dost thou say? remember,
Remember what?

ICARUS.

Thou hast no cause to fear;
Be not alarmed: thou mayest rejoice, that infant
Was——Œdipus.

PHORBAS.

The lightning blast thee, wretch!
What hast thou said?

ICARUS.

Doubt not, my lord, whatever
[*To Œdipus.*
This Theban says, he gave thee to my arms;
Thy fate is known; this old man is thy father.

ŒDIPUS.

What complicated misery! Alas!
[*To Phorbas.*
If thou art indeed my father, will the gods
Ever suffer me to shed thy blood?

PHORBAS.

O no!
For thou art not my son.

ŒDIPUS.

And didst not thou
Expose me in my infancy?

PHORBAS.

My lord,
Permit me to retire, and hide from thee
The dreadful truth.

ŒDIPUS.

No, Phorbas; by the gods
I beg thee, tell me all.

PHORBAS.

Begone, avoid
Thy children, and thy queen.

ŒDIPUS.

Now answer me,
For to resist is vain: that infant, doomed
To death by thee, say, didst thou give it him?
[*Pointing to Icarus.*

PHORBAS.

I did: and would that day had been my last!

ŒDIPUS.

And of what country was that child?

PHORBAS.

Of Thebes.

ŒDIPUS.

And thou art not his father?

PHORBAS.

No: alas!
Sprung from a nobler, but more wretched race——

ŒDIPUS.

Who was he then?

PHORBAS.

My lord, what would you do?
[*Throwing himself at the feet of Œdipus.*

ŒDIPUS.

Speak, speak, I say.

PHORBAS.

Jocaste was his mother.

ICARUS.

[*Looking at Œdipus.*

Behold the fruit of all my generous care!

PHORBAS.

What have we done?

ŒDIPUS.

I thought it must be so.

ICARUS.

My lord——

ŒDIPUS.

Away, begone, this moment leave me:
The dreadful gifts ye have bestowed on me
Must have their recompense; and ye have cause
To fear my wrath, for ye preserved my life.

SCENE IV.

ŒDIPUS.

At length the dire prediction is fulfilled,
And Œdipus is now, though innocent,
A base, incestuous parricide: O virtue!
Thou fatal empty name; thou who didst guide
My hapless days, thou hadst not power to stop
The current of my fate: alas! I fell
Into the snare by trying to avoid it:
Heaven led me on to guilt, and sunk a pit
Beneath my sliding feet: I was the slave
Of some unknown, some unrelenting power,

That used me for its instrument of vengeance:
These are my crimes, remorseless cruel gods!
Yours was the guilt, and ye have punished me.
Where am I? what dark shade thus from my eyes
Covers the light of heaven? the walls are stained
With blood; the furies shake their torches at me;
The lightnings flash; hell opens her wide gates:
O Laius! O my father! art thou there?
I see the deadly wound these hands had made;
Revenge thee now on this abhorred monster,
A monster who defiled the bed of her
Who bore him: lead me to the dark abode,
That I may strike fresh terror to the hearts
Of guilty beings by my punishment:
Lead on, I'll follow thee.

SCENE V.

ŒDIPUS, JOCASTE, ÆGINA, CHORUS.

JOCASTE.

O Œdipus,
Dispel my fears, thy dreadful cries alarm me.

ŒDIPUS.

Open, thou earth, and swallow me!

JOCASTE.

Alas!
What sad misfortune moves thee thus?

ŒDIPUS.

My crimes.

JOCASTE.

My lord!———

"DO NOT SAY HUSBAND; WE SHALL HATE EACH OTHER"

ŒDIPUS.

Away, Jocaste.

JOCASTE.

Cruel husband!

ŒDIPUS.

O stop! what name is that? am I thy husband?
Do not say husband: we shall hate each other.

JOCASTE.

What sayest thou?

ŒDIPUS.

'Tis enough: I have fulfilled
My horrid fate: know, Laius was my father;
I am thy son.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

O guilt!

SECOND PERSON OF THE CHORUS.

O dreadful day!

JOCASTE.

Ægina, drag me from this horrid place!

ÆGINA.

Alas!

JOCASTE.

If thou hast pity on Jocaste,
If without horror thou canst now approach me,
Assist me now, compassionate thy queen!

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

Ye gods! and is it thus your vengeance ceases?
Take back your cruel gifts, 'twere better far
That we had suffered still.

SCENE VI.

JOCASTE, ÆGINA, HIGH PRIEST, CHORUS.

HIGH PRIEST.

Attend, ye people,
And know, a milder sun now beams upon you:
At length the baleful pestilence is fled,
The graves once more are closed, and death hath left us;
The God of heaven and earth declares his goodness
In peals of thunder: hark!

[*Thunder and lightning.*

JOCASTE.

What dreadful flashes!
Where am I? heaven! what do I hear! Barbarians—

HIGH PRIEST.

'Tis done: the gods are satisfied: no more
Doth Laius from the tomb cry out for vengeance:
Jocaste, thou mayest live and reign; the blood
Of Œdipus sufficeth.

CHORUS.

Gracious heaven!

JOCASTE.

My son! and must I call him husband too!
Dear dreadful names! is he then dead?

HIGH PRIEST.

He lives,
But from the living and the dead cut off,
Deprived of light: I saw him plunge this sword,

Stained with his father's blood, into his eyes:
This fatal moment has to Thebes restored
Her safety: such are the decrees of heaven;
Which, as it wills, decides the fate of mortals,
All-powerful to save or to destroy.
Its wrath is all exhausted on thy son,
And thou art pardoned.

JOCASTE.

Punish then thyself.
[*Stabs herself.*
Jocaste, thus reserved for horrid incest,
Death is the only good remaining for me:
Laius, receive my blood: I follow thee:
I have lived virtuous, and shall die with pleasure.

CHORUS.

Unhappy queen, and sad calamity!

JOCASTE.

Weep only for my son, who still survives.
Priests, and you Thebans, who were once my subjects,
Honor my ashes, and remember ever,
That midst the horrors which oppressed me, still
I could reproach the gods; for heaven alone
Was guilty of the crime, and not Jocaste.

The End of the Fifth and Last Act.

MARIAMNE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

VARUS, a Roman Prætor, Governor of Syria.
HEROD, King of Palestine.
MARIAMNE, Wife of Herod.
SALOME, Sister of Herod.
ALBINUS, Friend to Varus.
MAZAEL, IDAMAS, } Herod's Ministers.
NABAL, an old Officer under the Asmonæan Kings.
ELIZA, Confidante of Mariamne.
Herod's Guard, Attendants on Varus, Herod, and Mariamne.

SCENE, JERUSALEM.

This piece was produced in 1724, the part of *Mariamne* was played by Adrienne Lecouvreur.

MARIAMNE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SALOME, MAZAEL.

MAZAEL.

It is enough: the power of Salome,
By all acknowledged, and by all obeyed,
On its firm basis stands immovable:
I fled to Azor, with the lightning's speed,
Even from Samaria's plain to Jordan's spring,
And quick returned: my presence there indeed
Was needful, to cut off the aspiring hopes
Of Israel's moody race: thy brother Herod,
So long detained at Rome, was almost grown
A stranger in his kingdom; and the people,
Ever capricious, turbulent, and bold,
Still to their kings unjust, aloud proclaimed,
That Herod was condemned to slavery
By haughty Rome; and Mariamne, raised
To the high rank of her proud ancestors,
Would from the blood of our high-priests select
A king, to rule o'er conquered Palestine.
With grief I see, she is by all adored;
Her name the dear delight of every tongue;
Israel reveres the race from whence she sprang,
Even to idolatry: her birth, her beauty,
And, above all, her sorrows, melt the hearts
Of the rude rabble, who, thou knowest, detest
And rail at us. They call her their dear sovereign,
And seem to threaten thee with swift destruction.

I saw the fickle multitudes alarmed
With idle tales like these, but soon I taught them
Another lesson; soon I made them tremble:
Told them great Herod, fraught with double power,
And armed with vengeance, would ere long return:
His name alone struck terror to their souls,
They saw their folly then, and wept in silence.

SALOME.

Thou toldest them truth, for Herod comes, and soon
Shall make rebellious Sion bend beneath him.
Antony's favorite is Cæsar's friend;
Fortune attends him, at his chariot wheels
Submissive chained: his subtle policy
Is equal to his courage, and he rises
With added strength and glory from his fall:
The senate crown him.

MAZAEL.

But when Mariamne
Shall see her husband, where will be thy power?
That haughty rival o'er the king had ever
A fatal influence that supplanted thee;
And her proud spirit, still inflexible,
And still revengeful, holds its enmity:
Her safety must depend on thy destruction,
And mutual injuries nourish mutual hate.
Dost thou not dread her all-subduing charms,
Those lordly tyrants o'er the vanquished Herod?
For five years past, ever since their fatal marriage,
Hath his strange passion for her still increased,
By hatred fixed, and nourished by disdain.
Oft have we seen the haughty monarch kneel
Before her feet, her eyes indignant turned
In fury from him, whilst in vain he sued
For softer looks than she would deign to give.

How have we seen him rage, and sigh, and weep,
Abuse, and flatter, threaten and implore!
Mean in his rage, and cruel in his love;
Abroad a hero, and a slave at home:
He punished an ungrateful barbarous race,
And, reeking with the father's blood, adored
The daughter; raised the dagger to her breast,
Guided by thee, then dropped it at her feet.
At Rome indeed, whilst from her sight removed,
The chain was loosened; but 'twill re-unite
When he returns, and shall again behold
The fatal charms which he so long admired:
Those powerful eyes are ever sure to please,
And will resume their empire o'er his heart:
Her foes will soon be humbled, and if she
But gives the nod, must fall a sacrifice
To her resentment. Let us guard against it,
And court that power which we can never destroy:
Respect well-feigned may win her to our purpose.

SALOME.

No: there are better methods to remove
Our fears of Mariamne.

MAZAEL.

Ha! what means?

SALOME.

Perhaps even now she dies.

MAZAEL.

And wilt thou dare
To do a deed so desperate? If the king—

SALOME.

The king assists me in the work of vengeance,
And has consented: Zares is arrived

At Solyma; my instrument of wrath
Waits for his victim: know, the time, the place,
The hand to execute, are ready all:
To-day it must be done.

MAZAEL.

Hast thou then gained
At last the victory? Could the king believe thee?
Spite of his passion, will he yield up all,
And act as thou commandest?

SALOME.

Not so: my power
Is more confined: scarce could I urge to vengeance,
With all my arts, his long-reluctant soul,
But I availed me of his absence from her:
Whilst Herod lived, exposed to all her charms,
Thou knowest I led a life of wretchedness,
Of doubt and fear, uncertain of my fate;
When, by a thousand crooked paths, at last
I found a passage to his heart, and thought
I had secured it, Mariamne came;
And, when he saw her, all was lost again;
My arts all baffled by a single glance:
Yes, the proud queen was mistress of my life,
And might have taken it: had she known the way
To manage well her easy lover's fondness,
Herod had signed the mandate for another,
And not for Mariamne; then the blow
I meant for her had fallen on Salome:
But I have made her pride assist my vengeance,
And I have only now to point the dart,
Which her own hand hath fashioned, to destroy her.
Thou mayest remember well the fatal time
That blasted all our hopes; when, Antony
Subdued, Augustus took the reins of empire,

Each Eastern monarch trembled on his throne:
Amongst the rest my hapless brother feared,
With his protector, he had lost his crown.
Resistance now was vain, and naught remained
But to address the conqueror of the world
In lowliest terms, and ask forgiveness of him.
Call back that dreadful day, when Herod, driven
Even to despair, beheld proud Mariamne
Spurn at his offered love and kind farewell;
Heard her with anguish heap reproaches on him;
Call for a father's and a brother's blood,
Shed by her tyrant husband: Herod flew
To me, and told his griefs; I seized the moment
Propitious to my vengeance, and regained
A sister's power o'er his distressed heart;
Inflamed his rage, and sharpened his despair;
Dipped in fresh poison the envenomed dart
That pierced his soul: then, desperate in his wrath,
Thou heardest him swear to exterminate the race
Of Hebrews, and destroy its poor remains;
Condemn the mother, and cut off her sons
From their inheritance: but soon to rage
Succeeded love; one look from her disarmed
His vengeance. I, with double eagerness,
Pressed his departure, and at length prevailed:
He left her; from that hour I was successful;
My frequent letters kept up his resentment,
And, absent from her, all his rage returned:
He blushed in secret for his weakness past,
And by degrees, as I removed the veil,
His eyes were opened: Zares caught with me
The favorable hour, and painted her
In blackest colors; told him of her power,
Her interest, friends, and the seditious faction,
The partisans of the Asmonæan race.

But I did more, I raised his jealousy;
He trembled for his glory, and his life:
Continual treasons had alarmed his soul,
And left it ever open to suspicion:
Whate'er he fears, still ready to believe,
He is not able to distinguish guilt
From innocence; in short, I fixed his soul,
Guided his hand, and made him sign the mandate.

MAZAEL.

'Twas nobly done: but what will Varus say,
The haughty prætor, will he see unmoved
A deed so daring? he's thy master here,
And, unconfirmed by Rome, thy power is nothing.
From Varus' hand thy brother must receive
His crown; nor can he act as sovereign here
Till the proud prætor shall restore it to him.
Will Varus, thinkest thou, e'er permit a queen,
Left to his care, to fall a sacrifice?
I know the Romans well, they ne'er forgive
Such rude contempt of their authority.
Thou wilt bring down the storm on Herod's head;
Their thunder's always ready; those proud conquerors
Are jealous of their rights, and take, thou knowest,
Peculiar pleasure in the fall of kings.

SALOME.

Fear not for Herod, Cæsar is his friend,
And Varus knows it, therefore will respect him:
Perhaps this Roman means to manage all,
But be it as it may, my aim is vengeance;
I'm on the verge of glory or of shame;
To-morrow, nay, to-day may change the scene:
Who knows if e'er hereafter I shall find
An hour propitious to me, who can tell

If Herod will be steady to his purpose?
I know his weakness, and I must prevent it,
Nor give him time to say, it shall not be.
When it is done, let Varus rage, and Rome
Pour forth her threats, it shall not damp my joys:
The Romans are not here my worst of foes;
No, I have more to fear from Mariamne;
I must subdue her rival powers, or perish:
But Varus comes this way, we must avoid him:
Zares ere now should have been here: I'll hence
And meet him; fare thee well.—If there be need,
My soldiers at the least alarm are ready,
And will defend us.

SCENE II.

VARUS, ALBINUS, MAZAEL, *Attendants on* VARUS.

VARUS.

Salome and Mazael—
They seem to shun us; in their eyes I read
Their terrors; guilt hath reason to be fearful,
And dread my presence.—Mazael, stay: go, tell
Thy cruel master his designs are known;
His wicked instrument is now in chains,
And should have met the death he merited,
But my regard for Herod bids me hope
That he will soon behold the snare they laid.
Punish the traitors, and revenge the cause
Of injured virtue: if thou lovest thy king,
If thou regardest his honor or his peace,
Calm his wild rage, embitter not his soul
With vile suspicions, and remember, slave,
Rome is the scourge of villainy; remember

That Varus knows thee; that he's master here,
And that his eyes are open to detect thee.
Away: let Mariamne be obeyed,
And treated like a queen; observe her well,
And, if thy life be dear to thee, respect her.

MAZAEL.

My lord—

VARUS.

Begone: you know my last commands;
Reply not, but obey them.

SCENE III.

VARUS, ALBINUS.

VARUS.

Without thee,
And thy well-timed advice, thou seest, my friend,
The beautous Mariamne had been lost.

ALBINUS.

Zares' return raised my suspicions of him;
His most officious care to avoid thy presence,
And troubled features, I must own, alarmed me.

VARUS.

How much I owe thee for the important service!
By thee she lives; by thee my heart once more
Shall taste its noble happiness, the best
And fairest treasure of the virtuous mind,
The happiness to succor the oppressed.

ALBINUS.

Such generous cares befit the soul of Varus;
Thy arm was ever stretched to help the wretched;

Still hast thou born Rome's thunder through the world,
And only conquered but to bless mankind;
Would I might say thy pity dictates here,
And not thy love!

VARUS.

Must love then be the cause?
Who would not cherish innocence like hers?
What heart, howe'er indifferent, would not plead
So fair a cause? who would not die to save her?

ALBINUS.

Thus the deceitful passion hides itself
In virtue's garb, and steals into the heart:
Thy hapless flame—

VARUS.

Albinus, I confess it;
The wretched Varus dotes on Mariamne:
Thou seest my naked heart, which fears not thee,
Because thou art my friend: judge then, Albinus,
How must her dangers have alarmed my soul!
Her safety and her welfare are my own;
Death in its ugliest form were welcome to me,
If it could make my Mariamne happy.

ALBINUS.

How altered is the noble heart of Varus!
Love has avenged himself of all thy flights;
No longer do I see the virtuous Roman,
Severe and unimpassioned, 'midst the crowd
Of rival beauties, who solicited
His wandering eyes, regardless of their charms.

VARUS.

To virtue then, thou knowest, and her alone,
I paid my vows: in vain corrupted Rome

Offered her venal beauties to my eyes;
Their pride disgusted, and their arts displeased;
False in their vows, and in their vengeance cruel:
I saw their shameless fronts all covered o'er
With foul dishonor: vanity, ambition,
Caprice, and folly, bore the name of love;
Such conquests were unworthy of thy friend.
At length the power I had so long contemned
Indignant saw me from his Eastern throne,
And soon subdued; it was my fate to rule
O'er Syria's melancholy plains: when heaven
Had to Augustus given the vanquished world,
And Herod, midst a crowd of kneeling kings,
Fell at his feet, and sued for his protection,
Hither I came, and fatal to my peace
Was Palestine, for there I first beheld her.
The melancholy theme of every tongue
Was Mariamne's woes; all wept her fate,
Doomed to the arms of an inhuman husband,
Who slew the father of his lovely bride:
Thou knowest what miseries she had suffered since,
Her sorrows only equalled by her virtue:
Truth, ever banished from the courts of kings,
Dwells on her lips, and all the art she knows
Is but the generous care to serve the wretched.
Her duty is her law; her innocence,
Calm and serene, contemns the tyrant's power,
And pardons her oppressor; even solicits
My aid to save the man who would destroy her.
Her virtues, her misfortunes, and her charms
United, are too powerful for my soul;
I love her, my Albinus; but my love
Is not a passion which one day creates,
And in another is forgotten; no:
The heart she has subdued is not the slave

Of loose desire, but by her virtue fired,
Means to revenge but never to betray her.

ALBINUS.

But if the king, my lord, has gained from Rome
Permission to return.

VARUS.

Ay, that I fear:
Alas! myself did move the senate for him.
Perhaps already he returns to empire,
And this abhorred mandate is his own;
The first sad proof of his authority:
It may be fatal to him. Varus' power
May soon be lost, but O! his love remains;
Yes, I will die in Mariamne's cause;
The world shall weep her fate, and I avenge it.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

SALOME, MAZAEL.

SALOME.

Thou seest we are ruined; Mariamne triumphs,
And Salome's undone: that lingering Zares,
How tedious was his voyage, as if the sea
Unwillingly transported him! whilst Herod
Flies with the winds to empire and to love:
But sea and land, the elements, the heavens,
All, all conspire with Varus, to destroy me.
Ambition, thou hast plunged me deep in woe;
Why did I listen to thy fatal voice?
I knew his foolish heart would soon relent;

Even now I fear he has revoked the mandate,
And all the harvest of my toil is grief
And danger, that still wait on high condition
Stripped of its power: already fawning crowds
Adore my rival, and insult my fall:
My feeble glories, all eclipsed by her,
Shall shine no more, for this new deity
Must now be worshipped: but this is not all,
My death, I know, must crown the triumph; she
Can never reign whilst Salome survives;
She will not spare a life so fatal to her.
And yet, O shame, O infamous submission!
My pride must stoop to vile dissimulation,
To soothe her vanity with feigned respect,
And give her joy of—Salome's destruction.

MAZAEL.

Despair not, Madam, arms may yet be found
To conquer this proud queen: I ever feared
Her powerful charms, and Herod's weakness for her;
But if I may depend on Zares, still
In the king's bosom dwells determined hate,
And he has sworn that she shall die: the blow
Is but suspended till he comes himself
To execute his vengeance; but, meantime,
Whether his heart be sharpened by resentment,
Or moved by love, it is enough his hand
Once signed the mandate: Mariamne soon
Will swell the tempest, and eternal discord
Shall rankle in their hearts: I know them well:
Soon will she light again the torch of hatred,
Revive his doubts, and work her own destruction:
With new disdain will irritate his soul:
Rely upon herself, and mark her ruin.

SALOME.

O! 'tis uncertain; I can never wait
Such tardy vengeance; I have surer means;
Danger has taught me wisdom: this loud rage,
These violent transports of the impassioned Varus,
If I observe aright, can never flow
From generosity alone, and pity
Is seldom known by marks like these: the queen
Has charms, and Varus may have charms for her.
I know the power of Mariamne's beauty,
Nor envy her the crowd of gazing fools,
Who throw their flattering incense at her feet;
The dangerous happiness may cost her dear:
Whether she listens to the Roman's vows,
Or with the conquest only means to soothe
Her fickle pride, it is enough for me,
If it preserves that power I must not lose
O'er Herod's heart. Take care my faithful spies
Perform their office; let them be rewarded,
And sell me precious secrets.—Ha! she comes,
Must I then see her?

SCENE II.

MARIAMNE, ELIZA, SALOME, MAZAEL, NABAL.

SALOME.

Joy to Mariamne:
Herod returns, and Rome this day restores
To me a brother, and to thee a husband.
Thy cruel scorn had raised his just resentment,
Which now subsides, and love has quenched the flame
Which love alone inspired: his triumphs past,

His future glories, all the senate's rights
Reposed in him, the titles he has gained,
All brought to lay at Mariamne's feet,
Proclaim thy happiness: enjoy his heart;
Enjoy his empire; I am pleased to see
Thy virtues thus rewarded; Salome
Shall lend her aid to join your hands together.

MARIAMNE.

I neither looked for, nor desired your friendship:
I know you, madam, and shall do you justice;
I know by what mean arts, and treacherous falsehood,
Your powerless malice has pursued my life.
Perhaps thou thinkest my heart is like thy own,
And therefore tremblest; but thou knowest me not:
Fear nothing, for thy crimes and punishment
Are both beneath my notice: I have seen
Thy base designs, and have forgiven them:
I leave thee to thy conscience, if a heart
Guilty as thine is capable of feeling.

SALOME.

I've not deserved this bitterness and wrath
From Mariamne: to my honest zeal,
My conduct, and my brother, I appeal
From thy suspicions.

MARIAMNE.

I've already told thee,
All is forgotten, I am satisfied,
And I can pardon, though I can't believe thee.

MAZAEL.

Now, by the power supreme, my royal mistress,
Scarce could my pains—

MARIAMNE.

Stop, Mazael, excuse
Is added injury; obey the king,
That is thy duty: sold to my oppressors,
Thou art their instrument; perform thy office,
I shall not stoop to make complaints of thee.
Thou, Salome, mayest hence, and tell the king
[*To Salome.*
The secrets of my soul; inflame his heart
Once more with rage; I shall not strive to calm it:
Instruct your creatures to deal forth their slander,
I've left their vile attempts unpunished still;
Content to use no arms against my foes,
But blameless virtue, and a just disdain.

MAZAEL.

What haughtiness!

SALOME.

'Twill meet with its reward:
It is the pride of art to punish folly.

SCENE III.

MARIAMNE, ELIZA, NABAL.

ELIZA.

Why, my loved mistress, would you thus provoke
A foe who burns with ardor to destroy you?
Perhaps the rage of Herod is suspended
But for a time, and yet may burst upon you.
Death was departing, and thou callest him back,
When thou shouldst strive to turn his dart aside:
Thou hast no friend to guard or to defend thee;
Varus, thy kind protector, must obey

The senate's orders, and to distant realms
Convey its high commands: at his request,
And by thy kind assistance, Herod gained
His power, and now the tyrant will return
With double terror: thou hast furnished him
With arms against thyself, and must depend
On this proud master, to be dreaded more
Because he loves, because his passion soured
By thy disdain———

MARIAMNE.

My dear Eliza, fly,
Bring Varus hither: thou art in the right;
I see it all; but I have other cares;
My soul is filled with more important business:
Let Varus come: Nabal, stay thou with me.

SCENE IV.

MARIAMNE, NABAL.

MARIAMNE.

Thy virtues, thy experience, and thy zeal
For Mariamne's welfare, have long since
Deserved my confidence: thou knowest my heart,
And all its purposes; the woes I feel,
And those I fear: thou sawest my wretched mother,
Driven to despair, with tears imploring me
To share her flight: her mind, replete with terror,
Sees every moment the impetuous Herod,
Yet reeking with the blood of half her race,
Assassinate her dearest Mariamne.
Still she entreats me, with my helpless children,
To fly his wrath, and leave this hated clime;
The Roman vessels might transport us soon

From Syria's borders to the Italian shore;
From Varus I might hope some kind protection,
And from Augustus; fortune points the way
For my escape, the only path of safety:
And yet, from virtue or from weakness, which
I know not, but my foolish heart recoils
At flying from a husband's arms, and keeps,
Spite of myself, my lingering footsteps here.

NABAL.

Thy fears are groundless; yet I must admire them,
Because they flow from virtue: thy brave heart,
That fears not death, yet trembles at the thought
Even of imaginary guilt: but cease
Your causeless doubts; consider where you are;
Open your eyes, and mark this fatal palace,
Wet with a father's and a brother's blood.
In vain the king denies the horrid deed;
Cæsar in vain absolves him from the crime,
Whilst the whole East pronounce him guilty of it.
Think of thy mother's fears, thy injured sons,
Thy murdered father, the king's cruelty,
Thy sister's hatred, and what scarce my tongue
Can mention without horror, though thy virtue
Regardless smiles, thy death this day determined.
If, undismayed by such a scene of woe,
Thou art resolved to meet and brave thy fate,
O still remember, still defend thy children:
The king hath taken away their hopes of empire,
And well thou knowest what dreadful oracles
Long since alarmed thy fears, when heaven foretold,
That a strange hand should one day join thy sons
To their unhappy father. A wild Arab,
Implacable and pitiless, already
Hath half fulfilled the terrible prediction:
After a deed so horrid, may he not

Accomplish all the rest? From Herod's rage
Nothing is sacred; who can tell but now,
Even now he comes to act his bloody purpose,
And blot out all our Asmonæan race?
'Tis time to guard against him, to prevent
His guilt, and stop his murderous hand; to save
Those tender victims from a tyrant's sword,
And hide them from the sight of such examples.
Within thy palace from my earliest years
Brought up, and by thy ancestors beloved,
Thou seest me ready to partake thy fortunes
Where'er thou goest: away then; break thy chains;
Fly to the justice of a Roman senate;
Implore them to adopt thy injured sons,
And shelter their distress: such innocence
And virtue will astonish great Augustus.
If just and happy is his reign, as fame
Reports, and conquered worlds in rapture bend
The knee before him, if he merits all
The honors he has gained, he must protect thee.

MARIAMNE.

My doubts are vanished, and I yield to thee;
To thy advice, and to a mother's tears;
To my son's danger, to my own hard fate;
Which dooms me yet perhaps to greater ills
Than I have suffered. Go thou to my mother;
When night shall throw her sable mantle o'er
This seat of guilt, let some one give me notice
That all is ready; since it must be done,
I am prepared.

SCENE V.

MARIAMNE, VARUS, ELIZA.

VARUS.

I come, great queen, to know
Your last commands; which, as the law of heaven,
Shall be revered: say, must this arm avenge thee?
Speak, and 'tis done: command, and I obey.

MARIAMNE.

Varus, I'm much indebted to thy goodness,
And, but my sorrows plead their own excuse,
Should not be thus importunate; I know
Thou lovest to help the wretched, therefore ask
Thy generous aid: whilst Herod's doubtful fate
Hung in the balance, and he knew not which
Awaited him, a prison or a throne,
I did solicit Varus in his favor;
Spite of his cruelties, against my peace,
Against my interest, I performed my duty.
Now Mariamne for herself implores
Thy kind protection; begs thee to preserve
From most inhuman laws, her hapless sons,
The poor remains of Syria's royal race.
Long since I should have left these guilty walls,
And asked the senate for some safe retreat;
But whilst the sword of war filled half the world
With blood and slaughter, 'twas in vain to seek
For refuge in the scene of wild destruction:
Augustus now hath given the nations peace,
And spread his bounties o'er the face of nature:
After the toils of hateful war, resolved
To make the world, which he had conquered, happy:

He sits supreme o'er tributary kings,
And takes the poor and injured to his care:
Who has so fair a title to his justice,
As my unhappy, my defenceless children?
Brought by their weeping mother from afar
To ask his succor; he will shelter them,
His generous hand will wipe off all our tears.
I shall not ask him to revenge my cause,
Or punish my proud foes; it is enough
If my loved children, formed by his example,
And by his justice taught, true Romans soon,
Shall learn to rule of those who rule mankind.
A mother's comfort, and her children's safety,
Depend on thee: my woes will vanish all
If thou wilt hear me; and thy noble heart
Hath ever been the friend of injured virtue:
To thee I owe my life: assist me now,
Remove me, Varus, from this fatal palace;
Grant my benighted steps a friendly guide
To Sidon's ports, where now thy vessels lie.
Not answer me! what means that look of sorrow?
Why art thou silent? O! too well I see
Thou wilt not hear the voice of wretchedness.

VARUS.

It is not so: I hear, and will obey thee:
My guards shall follow thee to Rome: dispose
Of them, of me; my heart, my life is thine.
Flee from the tyrant, break the fatal tie;
'Tis punishment enough to be forsaken
By Mariamne: never shall he behold thee;
Thanks to his own injustice; and I feel
Too well there cannot be a fate more cruel.
Forgive me, but the thought of losing thee
Hath drawn the fatal secret from my breast;
I own my crime: but, spite of all my weakness,

Know, my respect is equal to my love:
Varus but wishes to protect thy virtue,
But to avenge thy injuries, and die.

MARIAMNE.

I hoped the great preserver of my life
Would prove the guardian of my honor too;
And to his pity only thought I owed
His kind assistance; ne'er did I expect
That he, of all men, should increase my sorrows;
Or that, to crown the woes of Mariamne,
I should be forced to tremble at thy goodness,
And blush for every favor I received:
Yet, think not, Varus, that thy passion, thus
Declared, shall rob thee of my gratitude:
My constant friendship shall be ever thine;
I will forget thy love, but not thy virtues:
Thou hadst my praise and my esteem till now,
But longer converse may deprive thee of it;
For thy sake therefore, Varus, I must leave thee.

SCENE VI.

VARUS, ALBINUS.

ALBINUS.

I fear you're troubled, sir; your color changes.

VARUS.

Albinus, I must own, my spirits droop;
Pity, my friend, the weakness of a heart
That never loved before: alas! I knew not
How strong my fetters were, but now I feel,
Nor can I break them: with what sweet demeanor,
And lovely softness, did she chide my passion;

Calm and unruffled, how her tranquil prudence
Taught me my duty, and enforced her own;
How I adored her even when she repulsed me!
I've lost all hope, yet love her more than ever:
Gods! for what dreadful trial of my faith
Am I reserved?

ALBINUS.

Wilt thou then aid her flight?

VARUS.

'Tis a sad office.

ALBINUS.

Art thou pleased so well
With her disdain, as thus to make thyself
Unhappy, and promote thy own destruction?
What dost thou purpose?

VARUS.

Can I e'er forsake her?
Can I rebel against her laws? my heart
Were then unworthy of her. Hence my doubts.
'Twas Mariamne spoke, and I obey:
Quick, let her leave the tyrant; let her seek
Augustus; she has cause to fly, and Varus
Has none to murmur or complain; at least
She leaves me the sweet pleasure to reflect,
That I have lived and acted but for her;
Have broke her chains, have saved her precious life:
Nay more: for I will sacrifice my love,
Fly from those dangerous charms that would betray me,
And imitate the virtue I adore.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

VARUS, NABAL, ALBINUS, *Attendants on* VARUS.

NABAL.

The king, my lord, the happy Herod, comes
Triumphant, and the Hebrews flock in crowds
To meet him: Salome, alarmed and fearful
Of her declining interest, joins his train
Of fawning courtiers, soothes his pride, and strives
By every art to gain him to her purpose;
The priests attend, and strew their palms before him.
With Herod comes the faithful Idamas,
Deputed by his sovereign to attend
The noble Varus; he will soon be here.
Still hath he proved himself the constant friend
Of Mariamne, and by wholesome counsels
Softened the rage of his impetuous master:
The queen, still wavering and irresolute,
Condemns herself; her rigid virtue fears
To do what danger tells her must be done:
She quits the palace, then returns; meanwhile
Her anxious mother, falling at her feet,
Bathes them in tears, points to her weeping children,
And trembling begs her to depart: she stops,
And doubts, and much I fear will stay too long:
'Tis thou must hasten her; on thee alone
Depends the safety of the noblest being
Heaven e'er gave birth to. O preserve her; save
The race august sprung from a line of kings;
Save Mariamne. Are your guards all ready?
May I inform her of it?

VARUS.

All's prepared:
I gave them orders: she may go this moment.

NABAL.

And wilt thou too permit a faithful servant
To follow his loved mistress?

VARUS.

Go with her,
Wait on her steps, and guard her as thy life:
This hateful place deserves her not: may heaven,
In pity to her sorrows, smile upon her;
Light up a fairer sun to gild her journey,
And bid the waves in smoother currents flow,
Obedient to the sacred charge they bear!
Thou, good old man, mayest follow and attend her;
Thou art too happy, but thou hast deserved it.

SCENE II.

VARUS, ALBINUS, *Attendants on* VARUS.

VARUS.

Already Herod comes; the trumpet's sound
Speaks his return; unwelcome sound to me!
I dread his presence: cruel as he is,
Instant his wrath may fall on Mariamne:
Would she had left forever these sad seats
Of guilt and horror! would I might partake
Her flight! but O! the more I love, the more
I must avoid her: 'twere in me a crime
To follow her; and all that Varus can—
But Idamas approaches.

SCENE III.

VARUS, IDAMAS, ALBINUS, *Attendants on* VARUS.

IDAMAS.

Ere the king,
My royal master, comes, with gratitude
To pay thy bounties, and receive from thee
The holy sceptre, say, wilt thou permit me?—

VARUS.

No more: your king may spare this idle homage,
These practised arts of visionary friendship
Amongst the great, drawn forth with pompous splendor
But to amuse the gaping multitude
And foreign to the heart: but say, at length
Rome has consented; Herod is your king;
Doth he deserve to reign? Is the queen safe,
And will he spare the blood of innocence.

IDAMAS.

May the just gods, who hate the perjured man,
Open his eyes, now blinded by imposture!
But who shall dive into his secret thoughts,
Or trace the emotions of his troubled soul?
Naught can we draw from him but sullen silence;
Or if perchance the name of Mariamne
Escape his lips, he sighs, and raves; this moment
Gives secret orders, and the next revokes them:
Herod detests the race from whence she sprang,
And hates her more because he loved too well.
Perfidious Zares, by thy order stopped,
And by thy order freed, the artificer

Of calumny and fraud, will serve the cause
Of subtle Salome, whilst Mazael lends
His secret aid: the jealous Herod listens
To their suggestions; they besiege him closely;
And their officious hatred still keeps truth
At distance from him: this great conqueror,
Who made so many potent monarchs tremble,
This king, whose noble deeds even Rome admired,
Whose name yet fills all Asia with alarms,
In his own house beholds his glories fade:
Torn by suspicions, and o'erwhelmed with grief;
Led by his sister, hated by his wife:
I pity him, and fear for Mariamne.
Say, wilt thou not protect her?

VARUS.

'Tis enough:
Albinus, follow me, the queen's in danger:
Away, for I must save the innocent.

IDAMAS.

Will you not wait then for the king?

VARUS.

I know
I should receive him here: it is my duty,
For so the senate wills: but other cares
Inspire me now, and other interests guide:
'Tis my first duty to protect the wretched.

[*Exit Varus.*

IDAMAS.

What storms do I foresee? what new distresses
Will soon o'ertake us? Now, O Israel's God,
Change Herod's heart!

SCENE IV.

HEROD, MAZAEL, IDAMAS, *Attendants on* HEROD.

HEROD.

Varus avoid me too!
What horrors meet me here on every side!
Good heaven! can Herod inspire naught but hatred
And terror to mankind? Is every heart
Thus shut against me? To myself disgustful,
My people, and my queen; with grief oppressed
I re-ascend my throne, and only come
To see the sorrows my own hand hath made.
O heaven!

MAZAEL.

Be calm, my lord, let me entreat you.

HEROD.

Wretch that I am, what have I done!

MAZAEL.

Ha! weeping!
Shall Herod weep, the great, the illustrious king,
The dread of Parthia, and the friend of Rome,
For wisdom and for valor long renowned!
O! think my lord, of those distinguished honors
Which Antony and victory bestowed;
Think of thy fame, when seen by great Augustus,
He chose thee from a crowd of conquered kings,
And marked thee for his friend: call back the time,
When great Jerusalem, by thee subdued,
Submitted to thy laws; by thee defended,
Once more she shines with all her ancient lustre,
And sees her sovereign crowned with fair success:
Never was king in peace or war more happy.

HEROD.

There is no happiness on earth for me;
Fate points its poisoned arrows at my breast;
And, to complete my woes, I have deserved them.

IDAMAS.

Permit me, sir, the freedom to observe,
Your throne, by fears and jealousies surrounded,
Would stand more firmly on love's nobler basis:
The king who makes his people's happiness
Secures his own; thy soul, thus racked with tortures,
Might trace the poisoned waters to their spring.
O, my lord, suffer not malicious tongues
To wound the peace and honor of thy life;
Nor servile flatterers to estrange the hearts
Of those who long to serve their royal master:
Israel shall then enamored with thy virtues—

HEROD.

And thinkest thou Herod might again be loved?

MAZAEL.

Zares, my lord, still faithful to his charge,
Burns with the same unwearied zeal to serve thee:
He comes from Salome, and begs admittance.

HEROD.

What! both forever persecute me! No!
Let not that monster e'er appear before me;
I've heard too much already: hence, begone,
And leave me to myself: what shall I do
To calm my troubled soul? Stay, Idamas,
And, Mazael, stay.

SCENE V.

HEROD, MAZAEL, IDAMAS.

HEROD.

Behold this dreadful monarch,
This mighty king, who made the nations tremble;
Who knew so well to conquer and to reign,
To break his chains, and make the world admire
His wisdom and his power; behold him now,
Alas! how little like his former self!

MAZAEL.

All own thy greatness, and adore thy virtues.

IDAMAS.

One heart alone resists, and that perhaps
May still be thine.

HEROD.

No: Herod's a barbarian,
Unworthy of his throne.

IDAMAS.

Thy grief is just,
And if for Mariamne———

HEROD.

Fatal name!
'Tis that condemns me; that reproaches still
My tortured soul with cruelty and weakness.

MAZAEL.

My lord, your goodness but augments her hatred;
She loathes your sight, and flies from your embraces.

HEROD.

I courted hers.

MAZAEL.

Indeed, my lord?

HEROD.

I did:
This sudden change, this grief that hangs upon me,
These shameful tears, do they not all declare
That Herod is returned from Mariamne?
With love and hatred mingled in my soul,
I left the crowd of flatterers in my court,
And flew to her: but what was my reward?
How did we meet! in anger, frowns, and strife:
In her indignant eyes I read my fate,
And my injustice: she scarce deigned to cast
A look upon me; even my tears availed not;
They only served to make her scorn me more.

MAZAEL.

You see, my lord, her soul's implacable,
And never will be softened by indulgence;
It but inflames her pride.

HEROD.

I know she hates me;
But I've deserved it, and I must forgive her:
She has but too much cause from one so guilty.

MAZAEL.

Guilty, my lord? hast thou forgot her flights,
Contempt, and pride, and wrath, and fierce resentment;
Her father's plot, her own designs against thee,
And all her race thy mortal foes? Hircanus
Had oft betrayed thee; the Asmonæan league

Was firmly knit; and by such dangerous powers,
That nothing but a master-stroke could save——

HEROD.

No matter: that Hircanus was her father,
I should have spared him; but I only listened
To proud ambition, and the love of empire:
My cruel policy destroyed her race;
I killed the father, and proscribed his daughter:
I wanted but to hate and to oppress,
And heaven, to punish me, hath made me love her.

IDAMAS.

To feel a passion for a worthy object
Is not a weakness in us, but a virtue,
Worthy of every good which heaven hath given thee;
Esteem thy love amongst its choicest blessings.

HEROD.

What hath my rashness done! ye sacred manes,
Hircanus, Oh!

MAZAEL.

Banish the sad remembrance,
And grant, kind heaven, the queen too may forget it!

HEROD.

Unhappy father! more unhappy husband!
The injuries I have done my Mariamne
Make her more dear: O! if her heart—her faith—
But I have stayed too long: now, Idamas,
I'll make amends for all; go, haste, and tell her,
My soul, obedient to her will, shall lay
My throne, my life, my glory at her feet:
Amongst her sons I'll choose a successor.
She has accused my sister as the cause

Of her misfortunes, henceforth I disclaim her;
A nearer tie demands the sacrifice,
And Salome must yield to Mariamne:
My queen shall rule with power unlimited!

MAZAEL.

My lord, you will not———

HEROD.

Yes: I am resolved:
I know her now; she is the choicest gift
Of bounteous heaven; as such I shall revere her:
What cannot love, the mighty conqueror, do?
To Mariamne I shall owe my virtue.
In savage pomp, and barbarous majesty,
Too long hath Asia seen her sovereign rule
Respected by his people; feared, admired,
Yet hated still; with crowds of worshippers,
But not one friend. My sister, whom long time
This foolish heart believed, hath ne'er consulted
My happiness, my interest, or my fame:
For Salome, more cruel than myself,
And more revengeful, dipped her hands in blood,
And ruled my subjects with a rod of iron:
Whilst Mariamne felt for the unhappy,
Forgot her own distress to pity theirs,
And told me all their sorrows: but 'tis past:
Henceforth I will be just, but not severe;
I'll strive to please her by promoting still
The public weal: Judah shall bless my reign,
For I am changed. From this auspicious hour,
Far from my throne, shall every jealous fear
Be now removed: I will dry up the tears
Of the oppressed, and reign o'er Palestine,
Not as a tyrant, but a citizen;
Gain every heart to merit Mariamne's.

O seek her, tell her how my soul repents;
That my remorse is equal to my rashness.
Run, fly, begone, and instantly return.
What do I see? my sister? hence: O heaven,
Finish the woes of my unhappy life!

SCENE VI.

HEROD, SALOME.

SALOME.

Well, sir, you've seen your dear deceitful foe,
And suffered more affronts; I know you have.

HEROD.

Madam, permit me to inform you, this
Is not a time to add to my misfortunes;
I would remove them: my imperious temper
Made me more feared indeed, but more unhappy:
Too long already o'er this house of sorrow
Hath vengeance poured her black and deadly poison:
The queen and you, thus at perpetual variance,
Would be a spring of endless misery; therefore,
My sister, for our mutual happiness,
For thy repose and mine, 'tis best to part;
Immediately, away: it must be so.

SALOME.

What do I hear! O fatal enemy!

HEROD.

A king commands, a brother begs it of thee:
O may he ne'er again be forced to give
One cruel order, ne'er take vengeance more,
Nourish suspicions, or shed guiltless blood!
Thou shalt no longer make my life a burden;
Complain of me, lament thyself, but go.

SALOME.

Alas! my lord, I shall make no complaints;
Since I am doomed to banishment by thee,
It must be just, and fitting that I should be;
For I have ever learned to make thy will
My law: if thou commandest, I must obey;
I never shall resent the injury,
Or call on nature and the ties of blood,
Or to attest, or vindicate my wrongs;
The voice of nature's seldom heard by kings,
The ties of blood are much too weak to bind them:
I will not boast that tender friendship now
Whose zeal offends thee; much less would I call
To thy remembrance all my service past;
One look I see from Mariamne soon
Effaces all: but canst thou ever think
She will forget the attempt upon her life
Which Herod made? thee she must fear: thou therefore
Shouldst dread her more: thou knowest her vows, her thoughts
Are bent against thee, and whose counsels now
Shall stay her vengeance? Where's the faithful heart
Devoted to thee? where's the watchful eye,
Ever awake, to guard the life of Herod?
Who shall unravel all her subtle plots,
Or who restrain her wrath? Dost thou believe,
When thou hast put thy life within her power,
That love will plead for thee? O no! such hate,
Such scorn as hers, such desperate resentment——

HEROD.

Permit me, Salome, at least to doubt,
At least delude me with the flattering hopes

I may regain her heart: in this alone
I wish to be deceived: show some regard,
Some kind compassion for a brother's weakness:
I must believe, thou knowest I've too much reason.
Thy hatred was a barrier to our love:
Thy malice hardened Mariamne's heart,
And, but for thee, I had been less detested.

SALOME.

Couldst thou but know, O! couldst thou but conceive
To what excess——

HEROD.

Sister, I'll hear no more:
Let Mariamne threaten; let her take
This loathesome life, for I am weary of it;
So shall I perish by the hand I love.

SALOME.

It would be cruel to deceive you longer
By guilty silence, or conceal her crimes:
I know the dangerous hazard that I run
By serving you; but I must speak, though death
Were my reward: poor, blind, deluded husband,
Enslaved by love for a vile worthless woman;
Know Mariamne now, and know thy shame:
'Tis not her pride, her hatred, and disdain,
Should make thee loathe her, but that—she is false;
She loves another.

HEROD.

Mariamne love
Another! barbarous sister! to suspect
Her spotless virtue! Is it thus thou meanest
To murder Herod? Are these poisoned darts
The best farewell that thou canst leave thy brother?
To light up discord, shame, and rage, and horror,

In my distracted mind! Could Mariamne——
But thou already hast too oft deceived me;
Too long have I given credit to thy falsehood:
Now heaven has punished my credulity,
But it has ever been my fate to love
Those who abhor me. You are all my foes;
All sworn to persecute the wretched Herod.

SALOME.

Far from thy sight then——

HEROD.

Stir not hence, I charge thee;
Another is beloved? Speak, tell me, who
Must fall a sacrifice to Herod's vengeance?
Pursue thy work, and make my woes complete.

SALOME.

Since I must speak——

HEROD.

Strike here: behold my heart:
Who has dishonored me? Whoe'er he be,
Thou, Salome, perhaps mayest answer for it,
For thou art guilty: thou hast undeceived me:
Now at thy peril speak.

SALOME.

No matter.

HEROD.

Well——

SALOME.

'Tis——

SCENE VII.

HEROD, SALOME, MAZAEL.

MAZAEL.

Bear not this indignity, my lord,
The queen is fled, accompanied by Varus.

HEROD.

Varus, and Mariamne! gods! where am I?

MAZAEL.

Varus, my lord, and all his troops have left
The palace, and a secret band is placed
About the walls to favor her retreat;
Your Mariamne will be lost forever.

HEROD.

The charm is broke, and day shines full upon me:
Come, Salome, acknowledge now thy brother,
And know him by his wrath; let us surprise
The infidel: now judge if Herod still
Acts like himself, and like himself revenges.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

SALOME, MAZAEL.

MAZAEL.

Never did fair appearance gild so well
The specious covering of a happy falsehood:
With what dexterity I played on him,

And blended truth with artifice! But why
Art thou dejected? art thou not restored
To Herod's favor? Mariamne lost,
Beyond recovery lost? Thou art avenged;
The king's distracted. I am shocked myself
When I behold the work of my own hands:
Thou too hast seen the horrid spectacle,
The trembling slaves all butchered by his hand.
The queen half-dead, and fainting by their side,
And Herod's arm uplifted as in act
To murder her: the children bathed in tears
Fall at his feet, and offer their own lives
To save their mother's: canst thou wish for more,
Or hast thou aught to fear?

SALOME.

I fear the king,
I fear those fatal charms which he adores;
That arm which oft uplifted falls as oft
Inactive down; that anger which soon kindled
Is soon extinct; which, doubtful still and blind,
Exhausts its feeble powers in sudden transports:
My triumphs, Mazael, are uncertain still;
Twice has my fate been changed this day, and twice
To hatred love succeeded: if he sees
The queen again, we are undone.

SCENE II.

HEROD, SALOME, MAZAEL, *Guards.*

MAZAEL.

He comes,
And seems disturbed: what horror in his aspect!

SALOME.

Say, Herod, hast thou taken ample vengeance?

MAZAEL.

I hope my royal master will forgive
His faithful servant, who thus dares to speak
Touching the queen: but Varus is her safeguard;
Prevent his dark designs, and save thyself:
The haughty prætor, resolute and bold,
Will make a merit of destroying thee.

HEROD.

Alas! my sister, how have I been treated!
Deceived, betrayed! help me to rail, to curse
This dear ungrateful woman: now my heart
Rests all its hopes on thy assisting friendship:
Thou, Salome, wert made a sacrifice
To my unhappy love for Mariamne;
I numbered thee amongst my worst of foes;
For her unkindness did I punish thee;
But thou hast seen my tenderness betrayed,
And, ere this day is past, we'll be revenged:
Yes, she shall suffer for her fatal power
O'er Herod's heart, that sighed for her alone.
O how have I adored, and how detested,
The faithless Mariamne! and thou, Varus,
Shalt feel my wrath; thou art a Roman, therefore
Thy life is safe; but I can punish thee
In blood more precious, and a dearer self:
Thou shalt behold the object of thy love,
Who has preferred thee to her hated lord,
Thou shalt behold her soon expire in torment
Before thy eyes: dost thou not think Augustus
Will praise my just severity?

SALOME.

No doubt
He will, my lord, and would himself advise it.
On the same altar where his friends adore him,
He sheds the blood of foes: he teaches kings
To rule and to be feared; let Herod mark
And follow his example; thus alone
Thy life can be secure: the queen must stand
Condemned by all, and thou be justified.

MAZAEL.

But make good use of this important moment,
Whilst Varus is yet absent, and his forces
Far from our walls; now seize her, and complete
Thy easy vengeance.

SALOME.

Above all conceal
From Israel's sons thy purpose and thy grief,
And spare thyself the horror of a sight
So dreadful; fly from this unhappy place,
The witness of thy shame, that must recall
A thousand mournful images; O hide
From every eye thy sorrows and thy tears.

HEROD.

No: I must see her; face to face confound her;
Force her to answer; hear her poor excuses:
I'll maké her tremble at the approach of death,
And ask that pardon she shall never obtain.

SALOME.

My lord, you will not see her?

HEROD.

Fear me not;
Her doom is fixed: vainly she hopes that love

Will plead her cause; my heart is shut against her:
Those eyes, which once were dangerous to my peace,
Are harmless now; her presence will but raise
My anger, not my love. Guards, bring her hither;
I'll only see, and hear, and punish her.
Sister, I would be private for a moment:
[*To the attendants.*
Send Mariamne here: you may retire.
[*To the guards.*

SCENE III.

HEROD.

[*Alone.*
Art thou resolved to see her then? O Herod,
Canst thou depend on thy own treacherous heart?
Is not her guilt too plain, and have I not
Been basely injured? Why then seek for more?
What profit can this interview afford me?
I know her thoughts already, know she hates me;
Why lives she yet? revenge, thou art too slow!
Unworthy Herod, coward as thou art,
Go, see her, pardon, sigh again, and court
Your haughty tyrant. No: to-night she dies:
I've sworn it; the Asmonæan blood shall flow;
I hate the race, and am abhorred by them.
But see, she comes; heaven! what a mournful sight!

SCENE IV.

MARIAMNE, HEROD, ELIZA, *Guards.*

ELIZA.

Rouse up your spirits, madam, 'tis the king.

MARIAMNE.

Where am I; whither do you lead me? O
'Tis death to look upon him.

HEROD.

How my soul
Shudders at sight of her!

MARIAMNE.

Eliza, help,
Support me, I grow faint.

ELIZA.

This way.

MARIAMNE.

What torment.

HEROD.

What shall I say to her? O heaven!

MARIAMNE.

Well, sir,
Your pleasure: wherefore am I ordered here?
Is it to yield thee up the poor remains
Of hated life, destructive to us both?
Take it; strike here; I'll thank thee for the blow;
The only gift I would accept from thee.

HEROD.

Then thou shalt have it: but first speak, defend,
If possible, thy shameful flight, and tell me wherefore,
When Herod's heart to thee alone indulgent,
So oft offended, yet as oft forgave thee,
The partner of my empire and my glory,
What couldst thou purpose by so black a crime?

MARIAMNE.

Is that a question fit for thee to ask?
But 'tis not now a time for vain reproaches;
Yet sure, my lord, if wretched Mariamne,
Far from these walls had sought some kind retreat,
If she for once had dared to violate
A husband's rights, and swerve from her obedience,
Think of my royal ancestors; remember
My sufferings past, my present danger; think
On these, my lord, and blame me if thou darest.

HEROD.

But when thy guilty passion for a traitor,
For Varus———

MARIAMNE.

Stop thy bold licentious tongue:
My life is thine: but do not cover me
With foul dishonor; let me pass at least
Without a blush unspotted to the grave:
Do not forget the sacred tie that bound us,
That joined my honor and my fame with thine,
As such I have preserved them: look on me;
Strike here; thou art welcome: but remember still
I am thy wife; pay some respect to me,
And to thyself.

HEROD.

O! it becomes thee well
To talk of sacred ties which thou hast broken:
Perfidious woman! would not the proud scorn
And hatred thou hast shown alone condemn thee?

MARIAMNE.

Since thou already hast decreed my fate,
What would avail my hatred or my love?

What right hast thou to Mariamne's heart,
Which thou hast filled with sorrow, and despair,
And anguish: thou who, for these five years past,
Hast marked my days with bitterness and woe;
Thou fell destroyer of my guiltless parents.
Where is my murdered father? cruel Herod!
O! if thy rage had sought no blood but mine,
Heaven be my witness, I had loved thee still,
And blessed thee in my latest hour: but O!
Do not pursue me, Herod, after death;
Do not extend my woes beyond the grave,
Preserve my children; do not punish them,
Because they are mine, but act a father's part:
Perhaps hereafter thou wilt know their mother;
Perhaps shalt one day pity, when too late,
The heart, which, never but by thee suspected,
Could not disguise its griefs; the heart which still
Preserved its virtue, and, but for thyself,
Had loved thee, Herod.

HEROD.

Ha! what do I hear!
What charm, what secret power controls my rage,
And steals me from myself? O Mariamne!

MARIAMNE.

O cruel Herod!

HEROD.

O my foolish heart!

MARIAMNE.

For pity's sake behold my wretchedness,
And take this hated life.

HEROD.

My own is thine,
Forever thine; thou art my Mariamne:

Banish thy fears; O thou wert sure to triumph
When I beheld thee; make no more excuses,
Thou art, thou must be innocent: I now
Must tremble in my turn, and ask forgiveness:
Wilt thou not pardon him who pardoned thee?
Were our hearts made but to detest each other,
To persecute ourselves? Let us at once
End all our fears and all our pains together;
Give me thy love, give me thy hand again.

MARIAMNE.

Canst thou desire this hand? O heaven, thou knowest
Herod's is stained with blood.

HEROD.

It is: I slew
Thy father, and my king; but wherefore did it?
To reign with thee: and what was my reward?
Thy hatred; a reward I well deserved:
I have no right to murmur or complain;
Thy father's death, and the injustice done
To thy unhappy children, are the least
Of Herod's guilt; it reached even Mariamne,
And for a moment I detested thee;
Nay more, gave ear to foul suspicions of thee;
'Twill be the height of virtue to forgive me;
The more my crimes, the more thy soul will show
Its greatness: thou hast seen my weakness for thee,
Take heed that thou abuse it not; for love
And rage, thou knowest, by turns possess my soul;
O give it ease; thou turnest aside thine eyes,
Speak, Mariamne—

MARIAMNE.

Such tumultuous transports
Can never spring, I fear, from true repentance:
Art thou sincere, and may I trust thee, Herod?

HEROD.

Thou mayest: what is there which thou canst not do
If thou wilt cease to hate me? 'twas thy scorn
That raised such furious tempests in my soul;
It was the loss of Mariamne's heart
That made me savage, barbarous, and inhuman:
My tears shall wash away the mutual stain
Of both our faults: and here I swear—

SCENE V.

HEROD, MARIAMNE, ELIZA, *a Guard.*

GUARD.

My lord,
The people are in arms; they have destroyed
The scaffold raised by Salome's command,
And slain the officers of justice: Varus
Assumes the sovereign power, he comes this way,
And every moment we expect him here.

HEROD.

Ha! can it be! thus at the very instant
When I was falling at thy feet, to raise
Thy minion—

MARIAMNE.

O my lord, can you believe—

HEROD.

Thou seekest my life, and thou shalt have it, traitress;
But I will drag thee with me to the tomb,
Spite of thyself, we there shall be united.
A guard there, seize, and watch her.

SCENE VI.

HEROD, MARIAMNE, SALOME, MAZAEL, ELIZA, *Guards.*

SALOME.

O, my brother,
Venture not forth; for the rebellious Hebrews
Are raised against you, and demand your life,
Repeating still the name of Mariamne:
They come even now to seize and take her from thee.

HEROD.

Away. I'll meet them unappalled: but thou
Shalt answer for this insult: to thy care
I leave her, Salome, guard well thy charge.

MARIAMNE.

I fear not death, but call high heaven to witness—

MAZAEL.

My lord, the Romans are already here.

HEROD.

And must I leave the guilty wretch unpunished?
No: she shall bleed: it must be so: alas!
In my sad state I can determine nothing;
Death would be welcome; I'll away and meet it.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

MARIAMNE, ELIZA, *Guards.*

MARIAMNE.

Soldiers, retire, and leave your queen at least
The mournful privilege to weep alone.

[*The guards retire to a corner of the stage.*

Just heaven! is this at last my wretched fate?
My noble blood, my title to a throne,
All that could promise years of happiness,
And days of pleasure, turned to deadly poison,
Have filled my cup with bitterness and woe.
O birth! O youth! and thou destructive beauty,
Whose dangerous lustre but enflamed my pride,
Flattering delusion! unsubstantial shade
Of fancied bliss, O how hast thou deceived me!
Beneath my fatal throne forever lurked
Anguish and care, digging the grave that now
Gapes to receive the dying Mariamne.
In Jordan's flood I saw my brother perish,
My father massacred by bloody Herod,
Who now has doomed to death a guiltless wife:
My virtue still remained, and that the tongue
Of slander strives to wound: thou power supreme!
Whose chastisements severe are but the proofs
Of innocence, I ask not for thy aid,
Nor for thy vengeance; my great ancestors
Taught me to look on death unmerited
Without a fear: take then my guiltless blood,
But O! defend my fame: command the tyrant
To spare my memory; let not clamorous falsehood
Insult my ashes: virtue is avenged

When she's respected. But what new alarm,
What dreadful shrieks are these? the palace rings
With loud confusion, and the din of arms:
I am perhaps the cause, they fight for me:
They force the doors: ha! what do I see?

SCENE II.

MARIAMNE, VARUS, ELIZA, ALBINUS, *Soldiers.*

VARUS.

Away:
Hence ruffians; you who hold your queen in bondage,
Vile Hebrews, hence:—you, Romans, do your office.
[*Herod's guards go off, chained by Varus's soldiers.*
Now, Mariamne, thou art free; thou seest
The tyrant could not bar my entrance here:
Mazael lies bathed in his perfidious blood;
At least my arm hath half avenged the cause
Of injured majesty: haste, Mariamne,
Seize the propitious moment, and secure
A shelter from the storm: let us begone.

MARIAMNE.

My lord, I cannot now accept thy bounty;
After the vile reproach which Herod cast
On my fair fame, I should indeed deserve it,
Were I imprudent to receive the aid
Thou profferest: I have much more cause to dread
Thy kindness now than his barbarity;
'Twould be disgraceful thus to owe my life
To Varus; honor says even this is guilt,
And death alone can expiate my offence.

VARUS.

What wouldst thou do? alas! unhappy princess,
A moment may destroy thee: the time presses;
Still we're in arms, and Herod may succeed:
Dost thou not fear his rage and his despair?

MARIAMNE.

No: I fear naught but shame; and know my duty.

VARUS.

Am I then doomed forever to offend you?
But I will do the work of vengeance for thee,
Spite of thyself; once more I'll to the field;
And, if the tyrant comes across me there,
This arm——

MARIAMNE.

Stop, Varus; I detest a triumph
So dearly bought: know, sir, the life of Herod
Demands my care: his rights——

VARUS.

Are forfeited
By his ingratitude.

MARIAMNE.

The sacred tie——

VARUS.

Is broken.

MARIAMNE.

Duty hath united us.

VARUS.

But guilt divorces; therefore do not stay me,
Revenge thyself, and save so many virtues.

MARIAMNE.

Thou wouldst disgrace them.

VARUS.

He would take thy life.

MARIAMNE.

Yet his is sacred still to Mariamne.

VARUS.

He killed thy father.

MARIAMNE.

Varus, I know well
What Herod did, and what I ought to do.
Patient, I'll wait the fury of the storm,
Nor by his crimes would justify my own.

VARUS.

O noble, brave, unconquerable heart!
Ye gods, how many virtues have conspired
To swell this tyrant's guilt! O Mariamne!
The more thou shalt disclaim my proffered service,
The more am I resolved to disobey thee.
Thy honor disapproves what mine commands;
But naught shall stop me, naught intimidate:
I go to search the tyrant, and repair
The hours I've lost in not avenging thee.

MARIAMNE.

My lord——

SCENE III.

MARIAMNE, ELIZA, *Guards.*

MARIAMNE.

He's gone, and would not hear me: heaven!
Let not more blood be shed; O spare my subjects;
Pour all thy wrath on me, and spare even Herod!

SCENE IV.

MARIAMNE, ELIZA, NABAL, *Guards.*

MARIAMNE.

O Nabal, art thou here? what hast thou done
With my dear children? where's my mother?

NABAL.

Safe:
The wrath of Herod reaches not to them:
Thou art the only object of his fury,
Which kindles at the hateful name of Varus:
If he is conquered, Mariamne dies.
The barbarous Zares is already sent
With secret orders hither; thou mayest guess
The purport, therefore now exert thy power:
The people love thee; on their loyal zeal
Thou mayest rely; the sight of thee will raise
Their drooping hearts; let them behold thee: fly,
My royal mistress, let us call the priests,
All Judah's sons will rise to guard the race
Of their loved kings: at length the hour is come,
To conquer or to die: let me entreat thee——

MARIAMNE.

True courage lies in knowing how to suffer,
And not in stirring up rebellious crowds
Against their sovereign: I should blush to think,
That, anxious for itself, my fearful heart
Had ever formed a wish for his destruction,
Or raised my hopes of safety on his death:
No: heaven this moment has inspired my breast
With rage less guilty, and a nobler purpose:

Herod suspects me, he shall know me now;
I'll rush into the battle; strive to part
The king and Varus; cast myself before
My husband's feet, and yield him up my life.
I fled this morning from that dreadful vengeance
Which now I search for: banished by his crimes,
His danger has recalled me: honor bids,
And I obey: I go to save his life
Who thirsts for mine.

NABAL.

Alas! to what extremes——

MARIAMNE.

I'm lost: 'tis Herod.

SCENE V.

HEROD, MARIAMNE, ELIZA, NABAL, IDAMAS, *Guards.*

HEROD.

Did they see each other?
Now, faithless wretch, thou diest.

MARIAMNE.

Do not, my lord,
'Tis the last boon that I shall crave; O do not——

HEROD.

Begone—guards, follow her.

[*Guards carry off Mariamne.*

NABAL.

Eternal justice!

SCENE VI.

HEROD, IDAMAS, *Guards.*

HEROD.

Let me not hear her named: perfidious woman!
Well, my brave soldiers, are there yet more foes?

IDAMAS.

The Romans are subdued; the Hebrews bend
Once more submissive to the yoke; and Varus,
Covered with wounds, to thy victorious arm
Gives up the field: O thou hast gained this day
Eternal glory; but the prætor's blood,
Shed by thy hand, will draw on thee the vengeance
Of proud offended Rome: a crime like this—

HEROD.

And now for my revenge on Mariamne.
Unworthy of my love I cast her from me,
And from this moment shall begin to reign.
O! I was blind, that fond destructive passion
Was Herod's only weakness: let her die:
Let me forget her charms, and her remembrance
Be blotted now forever from my soul.
Are all things ready for the execution?

IDAMAS.

They are, my lord.

HEROD.

How quickly they obey me!
Unhappy Herod! must she perish then?
Didst thou say, Idamas, 'twas ready all?

IDAMAS.

The guards have seized her person, and too soon
Thy vengeance will be satisfied.

HEROD.

She courted
Her own destruction, and obliged me to it:
But she is gone: I'll think no more on it: Oh!
I could have lived and died with Mariamne:
To what hast thou compelled me?

SCENE the last.

HEROD, IDAMAS, NABAL.

HEROD.

Nabal, ha!
Whither so fast? just heaven! and in tears!
How my soul shakes with dreadful apprehension.

NABAL.

My lord—

HEROD.

What wouldst thou say?

NABAL.

My feeble voice
Dies on my trembling lips.

HEROD.

O Mariamne!

NABAL.

Superfluous sorrow!

HEROD.

Ha! 'tis past then, is it?

NABAL.

She is no more.

HEROD.

Ha! dead! great God!

NABAL.

My lord,
Permit me, 'tis a debt I owe to thee,
Due to her memory, to her virtues due,
To show thee what a treasure thou hast lost,
The worth of that dear blood which thou hast shed:
Know, Herod, she was never faithless to thee;
But, even whilst Varus fought for her, refused
His offered hand, slighted his ardent vows,
And hazarded her life to succor thee.

HEROD.

What do I hear? O wretched Herod! Nabal,
What has thou told me?

NABAL.

In that very moment,
Even when her generous heart inspired her last
And noblest act, thy cruel orders came,
And she was led to death: thy barbarous sister
Urged on her fate.

HEROD.

Inhuman Salome;
Why did my justice spare that cruel monster?
What punishments must be reserved for thee!
But let thy blood and mine—Nabal, go on,
And kill me with the melancholy tale.

NABAL.

How shall I speak the rest! the guard, thou knowest,
By thee directed, led her hence: she followed

"SHE WAS LED TO DEATH; THY BARBAROUS SISTER URGED ON HER FATE"

Without a murmur or reproach of thee;
Without affected pride, or real fear;
On her fair front sat graceful majesty,
Tempered with softness; modest innocence
And heart-felt virtue sparkled in her eyes;
Her sorrows gave new lustre to her charms;
Priests, Hebrews, all, with tears and shrieks besought her:
The soldiers called for death, and wept the fate
Of Mariamne—and of Herod too;
For deep, they cried aloud, would be thy grief,
And horror and remorse attend thee ever.

HEROD.

How every word strikes to my heart!

NABAL.

She felt
For their distress, and as she passed along,
Spake comfort to them. To the fatal scaffold
At length she came; there lifted up her hands,
Loaded with shameful chains, and thus she spake:
"Farewell, unhappy king; Herod, farewell!
Thy dying Mariamne weeps for thee,
And thee alone; may this be thy last act
Of foul injustice! may thy reign henceforth
Be happy! Take my people to thy care;
Protect my children; love and cherish them;
And I shall die content." She spake, and bent
Her beauteous body to the axe; I saw,
And wept her fall.

HEROD.

Then Mariamne's dead;
And Herod lives: thou dear, and honored shade!
Ye poor remains of all that once was fair,
And good, and virtuous, to the silent grave

Soon will I follow thee—Ye shall not stop me,
Perfidious subjects: from my murderous hand,
Why will ye wrest my sword? O Mariamne!
Come now, and be avenged: tear forth this heart
That bleeds for thee. I faint, I die.

[*He faints.*

NABAL.

His senses
Are lost; his grief o'erpowers him.

HEROD.

What thick clouds
O'erspread my troubled soul! deep melancholy
Weighs down my senses; why am I abandoned,
Left to my sorrows thus? No sister here;
No Mariamne! How you stand and weep
At distance from me! Dare you not approach me!
All Judah flies before her wretched king.
What have I done? why am I thus abhorred?
Who will relieve me? who will soothe my grief?
Fetch Mariamne to me.

NABAL.

Mariamne,
My lord!

HEROD.

Ay, bring her; for I know the sight
Of her will calm at once my agony:
When Mariamne's with me, my blessed hours
Are all serene, and life glides sweetly on:
Methinks her very name hath healed my woes,
And lessened my affliction: let her come.

NABAL.

My lord—

HEROD.

I'll see her.

NABAL.

Sir, have you forgot
That Mariamne's dead?

HEROD.

What sayest thou?

NABAL.

Grief
Transports him; his mind's hurt; he's not himself.

HEROD.

Ha! Mariamne dead! destructive reason,
Why comest thou now to tell me this sad truth?
Down with these hateful walls, this fatal palace,
Stained with her blood, and let its ruins hide
The accursed place where Mariamne perished!
Is she then dead, and I her murderer!
Punish this parricide, this horrid monster:
Tear him in pieces, you who weep her loss,
My subjects; and thou, heaven, who hast her now,
Send down thy vengeful lightnings, and destroy me.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

SOCRATES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SOCRATES.

ANITUS. High Priest of Ceres.

MELITUS, one of the Judges of Athens.

XANTIPPE, Wife of Socrates.

AGLAE, a young Athenian Lady, brought up by Socrates.

SOPHRONIMUS, a young Athenian Gentleman, brought up by Socrates.

DRIXA, TERPANDER, ACROS, Friends of Anitus.

Judges, Disciples of Socrates, and three Pedants, Protected by Anitus.

SOCRATES.

ACT I. SCENE I.

ANITUS, DRIXA, TERPANDER, ACROS.

ANITUS.

My dear confidante, and you my trusty friends, you well know how much money I have put into your pockets this last feast of Ceres: I am now going to be married, and I hope you will all do your respective duties on this great occasion.

DRIXA.

That, my lord, we most certainly shall, provided you give us an opportunity of getting a little more by it.

ANITUS.

I shall want of you, Madam Drixa, two fine Persian carpets; from you, Terpander, I must have two large silver candlesticks; and from you, half a dozen robes.

TERPANDER.

A considerable demand, my lord; but there is nothing which we would not do to merit your holy protection.

ANITUS.

O you will be rewarded for it a hundred fold: 'tis the best means to gain the favor of the gods: give much, and much you shall receive; but above all fail not, I beseech you, to stir up the people

against all the rich and great, who are deficient in paying their vows, and presenting their offerings.

ACROS.

On that, my lord, you may depend; it is a duty too sacred ever to be neglected by us.

ANITUS.

'Tis well, my friends; may heaven continue to inspire you with the same just and pious sentiments, and be assured you will prosper; you, your children, and your children's children, to all posterity.

TERPANDER.

You have said it, my lord, and therefore it must be so.

SCENE II.

ANITUS, DRIXA.

ANITUS.

Well, my dear Drixa, I believe you will have no objection to my marrying Aglae; I shall not love you the less, and we may still live together as we used to do.

DRIXA.

O my lord, I am not jealous; as long as trade goes on well, I am contented. While I had the honor of being one of your mistresses, I was a woman of some consequence in Athens: but if you are in love with Aglae, I, in my turn, am as fond of young Sophronimus: and Xantippe, Socrates's wife, has promised that he shall marry me. I shall be always, notwithstanding, as much at your service as ever.

I am only vexed that this young fellow has been brought up with that rascal Socrates, and that Aglae is still in his hands. We must take them both out as fast as we can. Xantippe will be glad to get rid of them. The beautiful Sophronimus and the fair Aglae have a sad time of it with the surly Socrates.

ANITUS.

I am in great hopes, my dear, that Melitus and I together shall soon be able to destroy this dangerous fellow, who preaches nothing but virtue and divinity, and has taken the liberty to laugh at some certain adventures that happened at the mysteries of Ceres: but he is Aglae's tutor: her father, Agathon, they tell me, has left her a great fortune: in short, Aglae is a charming girl; I love her, and I will marry her; and as to Socrates, I shall take care of him.

DRIXA.

Do what you please with Socrates, so I can but get my dear Sophronimus: but how could that fool Agathon leave his daughter in the hands of this old flat-nosed Socrates, that intolerable reasoner, who corrupts all our young men, and keeps them away from courtesans and the mysteries?

ANITUS.

Agathon himself was tainted with the same vile principles: he was one of your sober, serious fools, whose manners differed in every respect from ours; a man, in short, of another age, one of our sworn and inveterate enemies, who think they have fulfilled every duty, when they worship God, assist man, cultivate friendships, and study philosophy; one of those ridiculous creatures who insolently deny that

the gods prognosticate future events by the liver of an ox; those merciless reasoners, who find fault with priests for sacrificing young girls, or passing a night with them on occasion. These you see, Drixa, are a kind of people not fit to live. As to Socrates, I should have been glad to have him strangled long ago. However, I have agreed to meet him here in the portico, and talk with him about the marriage.

DRIXA.

Here he comes: you do him too much honor: but I must leave you, and talk to Xantippe about my young man.

ANITUS.

The gods conduct you, my dear Drixa; remember to serve them, and don't forget my two fine Persian carpets.

SCENE III.

ANITUS, SOCRATES.

ANITUS.

Good morning, my dear Socrates, thou favorite of the gods, and wisest of men; methinks every time I see you I am raised above myself; in you I look up with admiration to the dignity of human nature.

SOCRATES.

O my lord, I am a plain simple man, as void of knowledge, and as full of weakness, as any of my fellow-creatures: it is enough for me if you can bear with me.

ANITUS.

Bear with? I admire you, and would it were possible I could resemble you! To convince you of it, and that I may oftener be a witness to your virtues, and improve by your instructions, I am willing to espouse your fair pupil Aglae, whom I find you have the entire disposal of.

SOCRATES.

It is true indeed that her father Agathon, who was my friend, the dearest of all relations, bequeathed to my care, by his last will, this amiable and virtuous orphan.

ANITUS.

With a considerable fortune no doubt, for I hear she is one of the best matches in all Athens.

SOCRATES.

With regard to that I can give you no information; her father, my dearest friend, whosé will is ever sacred to me, forbade me to divulge the situation of her affairs in that point.

ANITUS.

This respect and discreet veneration for the last will of your friend are worthy of your noble soul; but it is well enough known that Agathon was rich.

SOCRATES.

He deserved to be so, if riches are a mark of the divine favor.

ANITUS.

They tell me a young coxcomb, named Sophronimus, makes love to her on account of her fortune; but I am persuaded you will not give encouragement to such a fellow, and that Anitus will have no rival.

SOCRATES.

I know in what light I ought to consider a person like you; but it is not for me to thwart the inclinations of Aglae. I would supply the place of a father to her, but I am not her master: she has a right to dispose of her own heart: I look upon restraint in this case as a crime: talk to her: if she hearkens to your proposal, with all my heart, I have no objection.

ANITUS.

I have your wife's consent already; without doubt she is acquainted with Aglae's sentiments, and therefore I look upon the affair as good as concluded.

SOCRATES.

But I never look upon things as done till they are really so.

SCENE IV.

SOCRATES, ANITUS, AGLAE.

SOCRATES.

Come hither, Aglae, and determine for yourself. Here is a person of considerable rank, who offers himself to you for a husband: you are at liberty to explain yourself to him: my presence might perhaps be a restraint upon you: whatever choice you make I shall approve: Xantippe will prepare everything for your nuptials.

AGLAE.

Generous Socrates! I am sorry you leave me.

ANITUS.

You seem, charming Aglae, to place great confidence in the good Socrates.

AGLAE.

It is my duty, sir; he has been a father to me; he has educated and instructed me.

ANITUS.

And pray, my dear, as he has instructed you, tell me what is your opinion of Ceres, Cybele, and Venus?

AGLAE.

Of them, sir, I will think just as you please.

ANITUS.

'Tis well said, and you will do as I please, too, then I hope.

AGLAE.

No, sir, that is quite another affair.

ANITUS.

You see, the wise Socrates consents to our marriage, and Xantippe above all things wishes for it. You know my passion for you, and are no stranger to my rank and fortune; my happiness, perhaps your own too, depends on one word, therefore determine.

AGLAE.

I will answer you, sir, with that truth and sincerity which the great man who just now left us taught me never to depart from: I respect your dignity, know but little of your person, and, in a word, can never be yours.

ANITUS.

Never? cruel Aglae, are you not free? you will not then?

AGLAE.

No, sir, I cannot.

ANITUS.

What an affront, what an indignity is this! but 'tis to Socrates I am obliged for it: he dictated your answer, I know he did; he prefers Sophronimus to me, that unworthy rival, that impious—

AGLAE.

Sophronimus is not impious, not unworthy; Socrates has loved him from his infancy; he has been a father to us both. Sophronimus is all beauty and all virtue; I love, and am beloved by him; it is in my power to marry him if I think proper; but I shall no more be his than yours.

ANITUS.

You astonish me: what! own you love Sophronimus?

AGLAE.

Yes, sir, I own it, because it is true.

ANITUS.

And yet when it is in your power to make yourself happy with him, refuse him you hand?

AGLAE.

That, sir, is no less true.

ANITUS.

Then I suppose your fear of displeasing me prevents your engaging with him?

AGLAE.

No such thing, I assure you: for having never wished to please, I have no fear of displeasing you.

ANITUS.

You dread then perhaps the displeasure of the gods, at seeing you prefer a profane wretch, like Sophronimus, to a high-priest?

AGLAE.

Not in the least. I am persuaded it is matter of very little concern to the supreme being, whether I marry you, or not.

ANITUS.

The supreme being! my dear child, you should not talk in this manner; you should say the gods and goddesses: take care, for I see you entertain some very dangerous opinions; but I know too well from whom they came. Learn then that Ceres, whose priest I am, may punish you for thus despising her worship, and her minister.

AGLAE.

I despise neither the one nor the other. I have been told that Ceres presides over the harvest, and I believe it; but she has nothing to do with my marriage.

ANITUS.

She has to do with everything; you know it; but I hope I shall be able to convert you. Are you indeed resolved not to marry Sophronimus?

AGLAE.

Yes; I am resolved, and am very sorry for it.

ANITUS.

I cannot understand a word of all these contradictions: but observe me; I love you, would have made you happy, and advanced you to rank and dignity: be advised, and reject not the offers which kind fortune thus courts you to accept: remember that everything should be sacrificed to our real interest; that youth will pass away, but riches remain: that wealth and honors should be your first concern, and that I speak to you on the part of the gods. I beg you will reflect seriously on what I have said: farewell; my dear girl, I shall pray to Ceres that she would inspire you, and still flatter myself she will touch your heart. Once more adieu, remember, you have promised me never to marry Sophronimus.

AGLAE.

I promised myself, but not you.

[*Exit Anitus.*

AGLAE.

[*Alone.*

This man but makes me more unhappy. I know not why it is, but I never see him without shuddering: but here comes Sophronimus: alas! whilst his rival fills my heart with terror, he increases my tenderness and doubles my disquietude.

SCENE V.

AGLAE, SOPHRONIMUS.

SOPHRONIMUS.

My dear Aglae, I met Anitus, the priest of Ceres, that worst of men, the sworn enemy of Socrates,

just coming from you: your eyes seem bathed in tears.

AGLAE.

Is he the enemy of our benefactor too? then indeed I wonder not at my aversion to him, even before he spoke.

SOPHRONIMUS.

And is he the cause of your tears, my Aglae?

AGLAE.

No, Sophronimus, he can inspire nothing but hatred and disgust: my tears can flow for you alone.

SOPHRONIMUS.

For me? O gods, for me, who would repay them with my blood, for me who adore you, who hope to be beloved by Aglae, who only live for and would die for you? shall I reproach myself with having embittered one moment of your life? Aglae weeps, and Sophronimus is the cause. What have I done? what crime have I committed?

AGLAE.

None, my Sophronimus: you could not do it: 'tis not in your nature. I wept because you merit all my tenderness, because you have it, and because I must renounce you.

SOPHRONIMUS.

What dreadful sentence have you pronounced against me? I cannot believe you: you love me, you said you did, and Aglae can never change. You have promised to be mine, you cannot wish my death.

AGLAE.

No; I would have thee live and be happy: but,

alas! I cannot make you so: I hoped I could, but fortune has deceived me. I swear to you, Sophronimus, since I cannot be yours, I never will be another's. I have declared so to Anitus, who courts me, and whom I despise; and here I declare the same to you, with a heart full of grief, tenderness, and love.

SOPHRONIMUS.

Since you love me, I must live; but if you refuse me your hand, it will be death to Sophronimus; therefore, my dearest Aglae, in the name of love, of all your charms, and all your virtues, explain to me this dreadful mystery.

SCENE VI.

SOCRATES, SOPHRONIMUS, AGLAE.

SOPHRONIMUS.

O my honored master, my father, and my friend, behold in Sophronimus the most unfortunate of men, though in the presence of the only two beings upon earth who could make me happy: Socrates first taught me wisdom, and from Aglae I learned to love; you consented to our marriage, and this beauteous fair one, who seemed so desirous of it, now refuses me; and whilst she says she loves, plunges a dagger in my heart: she has broke off the match without assigning any cause of her cruel caprice: O Socrates, prevent my misery, or teach me, if possible, how to bear it.

SOCRATES.

Aglae is mistress of herself; her father made me her tutor, but not her tyrant; to see you united

would have made me happy: if she has changed her mind I am surprised and sorry for it: but let us hear her reasons; if they are good, we must submit to them.

SOPHRONIMUS.

It is impossible they should.

AGLAE.

To me however they appear so, but you shall hear them. When you first opened my father's will, most noble Socrates, you told me he had left me a sufficient competency; from that moment I resolved to bestow my fortune on the good Sophronimus, who has no support but you, no riches but his virtue: you applauded my resolution. How great was my happiness, in promoting that of him whom you have so long regarded as your own son! full of this pleasing hope I laid open the situation of my heart to Xantippe, who at once undeceived me. She treated me as an idle visionary; showed me the will of my father, who died a beggar, and left me nothing but your friendship to depend on. Awakened from my dream of promised happiness, nothing remained for me but the melancholy reflection that it was no longer in my power to make the fortune of Sophronimus: I would not oppress him with the weight of my misfortunes.

SOPHRONIMUS.

I told you, Socrates, her reasons were poor and insufficient. If she loves me, am I not rich enough? Hitherto, it is true, I have subsisted from your bounty; but there is no employment, however irksome, which I would not undertake, to provide for my dearest Aglae: I ought indeed to make her a

sacrifice of my passion, to find out some richer, happier lover for her: but I own my weakness, I cannot do it, there I am indeed unworthy of her; but if she could content herself with my low estate, if she could stoop to my humble condition: but I dare not hope so much; I sink beneath a misfortune which her fortitude is able to bear.

SOCRATES.

My dear children, it was very indiscreet in Xantippe to show you the will; but believe me, Aglae, she deceived you.

AGLAE.

Indeed she has not: I saw it with my own eyes: I know my father's hand too well to have the least doubt of it: but be assured, Socrates, I shall be able to bear poverty as I ought: these hands will support me; if I can but live, it is enough for me, but it is not for Sophronimus.

SOPHRONIMUS.

It is too much, a thousand times too much for me: thou tender, noble soul, worthy of thy illustrious master: a virtuous and laborious poverty is the natural state of man. I wish I could have offered you a throne, but if you will condescend to live with Sophronimus, our respectable poverty will be superior to the throne of Crœsus.

SOCRATES.

Your generous sentiments at once delight and distress me: I behold with transport those virtues budding forth in your heart, which I myself had sown: never were my hopes better fulfilled than in Aglae and Sophronimus: but once more believe me,

Aglae, my wife has misinformed you: you are richer than you think you are: it was not to her, but to me your father entrusted you. May he not have left you a fortune which Xantippe knows nothing of?

AGLAE.

No, Socrates, he says expressly in his will, that he has left me poor.

SOCRATES.

And I tell you that you are deceived, that he has left you a sufficient competency to enable you to live happily with the virtuous Sophronimus, and that I desire therefore you would come, and sign the contract immediately.

SCENE VII.

SOCRATES, XANTIPPE, AGLAE, SOPHRONIMUS.

XANTIPPE.

Come, come, child, don't stand amusing yourself there with my husband's visions and nonsense: philosophy to be sure is a mighty pretty thing when folks have nothing else to do: but you are a beggar, child; and must study how to live first, and philosophize afterwards. I have concluded your marriage with Anitus, a worthy priest, and a man of fortune. Come, child, follow me, let me have no delays nor contradiction; I love to be obeyed: quick, quick, my dear, 'tis for your good, therefore let me have none of your reasonings, but follow me.

SOPHRONIMUS.

O heaven! my dear Aglae!

SOCRATES.

Let her talk, and trust to me for your happiness.

XANTIPPE.

Let me talk indeed! I shall talk and do too, I assure you. You are a pretty one to be sure, with your wisdom, your familiar demon, your irony, and all your nonsense that signifies nothing, to trouble yourself about matrimony: you are a good sort of a man, but you really know nothing of the world; happy is it for you that I am able to govern you. Come, Aglae, I must settle you as soon as possible: And you, sir, there, that seem as if you were thunderstruck, I have taken care of you too: Drixa is the woman for you: you will both of you thank me by and by: I shall have done it all in a minute: I am very expeditious: let us lose no time therefore, by rights it should have been all over before this.

SOCRATES.

My children, don't thwart or provoke her, but pay her all kind of deference: we must comply with since we can't mend her: it is the triumph of reason to live well with those who have none.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

SOCRATES, SOPHRONIMUS.

SOPHRONIMUS.

Divine Socrates, I know not how to believe my own happiness: how can Aglae, whose father died in

extreme poverty be possessed of so considerable a fortune?

SOCRATES.

I told you before, she had more than she thought she had: I knew her father's affairs better than herself: let it suffice that you both enjoy a fortune which you deserve: the secrets of the dead should be preserved as religiously as those of the living.

SOPHRONIMUS.

I am only afraid the priest of Ceres, to whom you have preferred Sophronimus, will endeavor to avenge Aglae's refusal upon you: he is a man whom we have reason to dread.

SOCRATES.

What has he to fear who does his duty? I know the malice of my enemies; I know all their calumnies; but when we take care never to offend God, and endeavor to do all the good we can to mankind, then is it that we are afraid of nothing, or whilst we live, or when we die.

SOPHRONIMUS.

I know it well; yet I should die with grief if the happiness you bestowed on me should induce your enemies to put your virtue to the trial.

SCENE II.

SOCRATES, SOPHRONIMUS, AGLAE.

AGLAE.

O my benefactor, my father, let me fall at your feet, thou more than man; join me, Sophronimus, in mutual acknowledgments; 'tis he, 'tis Socrates

who marries us at his own expense, and gives us best part of his own fortune to support us: but we must not suffer him, we must not be rich on these conditions; no, if our hearts have any gratitude, let them imitate his generosity.

SOPHRONIMUS.

O Socrates, with her I throw myself at thy feet; like her I am charmed, astonished and confounded at thy goodness; we will not, must not abuse it: look on us as your children, but do not let those children be a burden to their kind parent; thy friendship is fortune sufficient, 'tis all that we desire: you are not rich, and yet you do more than all the great ones of the earth; but were we to accept thy bounties, we should be unworthy of them.

SOCRATES.

Rise, my children, you affect me too deeply: are we not bound to respect the will of the dead? did not your father, Aglae, whom I always considered as part of myself, did he not enjoin me to treat you as my daughter? Had I not done so, I had betrayed the confidence of friendship: I took upon me the performance of his will, and I have executed it: the little I bestow on you would have been useless to my old age, which has not many wants to supply. If it was my duty to obey my friend, it is yours to obey your father. I am that father now, and by that sacred name command you not to make me unhappy by your refusal: but retire, I see Xantippe coming this way; I have reasons for desiring you to avoid her at present.

AGLAE.

Your commands are cruel, but they must be obeyed.

SCENE III.

SOCRATES, XANTIPPE.

XANTIPPE.

A fine piece of work you have made here; upon my word, my dear husband, I must put a stop to your proceedings. Here had I promised Aglae to Anitus the high-priest, a man of interest amongst the great, and Sophronimus to the rich Drixa, who has extensive influence in the whole nation; and you marry your two fools together, and make me break my word to both: not content with this, you must needs give them best part of your fortune too. Twenty thousand drachms! good gods! twenty thousand drachms! are you not ashamed of yourself? at the age of threescore and ten too? Who's to pay your physicians when you are sick? or your lawyers when you have a law-suit? What am I to do, when that villainous wry-necked fellow, Anitus, whom you might have had on your side, if he should join his party to persecute you, as they have done so often already? confusion to all philosophy and philosophers I say, and to my own foolish regard for you! You pretend to direct others, and want leading-strings yourself; always reasoning without a grain of common sense. If you were not one of the best men in the world, you would be the most ridiculous and the most insupportable: but mind me, you have only one way left, break off this foolish match, and do what your wife bids you.

SOCRATES.

You talk well, my dear Xantippe, and with great moderation; but hear what I have to say in return. I did not propose this marriage myself, but Aglae and Sophronimus love and are worthy of each other. I have already made over everything to you that the laws will allow me, and have given almost all that remained to the daughter of my friend: the little which I keep is enough for me. I have no physician to pay because I live sober; no lawyers because I have neither debts nor reversions: and with regard to that philosophy you reproach me with, it will teach me to bear the malice of Anitus, and your treatment of me; nay, even to love you, in spite of your ill-humor.

[*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

XANTIPPE.

[*Alone.*

The old fool! and yet, spite of myself, I can't help esteeming him; for after all, there is something great even in his follies: but his coolness and indifference make me mad. To scold him is but lost labor: for these thirty years past I have been perpetually pecking at him; and when I have tired myself with it, he bids me go on, and I am dumbfounded. Surely there must be something in that soul of his superior to mine.

SCENE V.

XANTIPPE, DRIXA.

DRIXA.

So, Madam Xantippe, I see you are mistress at home: fie! fie! how mean it is to be governed by a husband! this vile Socrates, to prevent my making a young fellow's fortune; but I'll be revenged.

XANTIPPE.

My dear Madam Drixa, don't be so angry with my husband, I am angry enough with him myself: he's a poor, weak man, I confess; but I verily believe has one of the best hearts in the world; has not the least degree of malice, and does a thousand foolish things without designing, and with so much honesty, that one can't help forgiving him: then indeed he is as obstinate as a mule: I have done nothing but tease and torment him my whole life; nay, I have even beat him sometimes, and yet I have never been able to mend him, nay, not so much as to put him into a passion. What can I do with him?

DRIXA.

I tell you, I'll be revenged; under yonder portico I perceive his good friend Anitus, and some more of our party: let me alone with him.

XANTIPPE.

My god! I am dreadfully afraid these folks, all together, will do my poor husband some mischief: I must go and tell him of it, for after all one can't help loving him.

SCENE VI.

ANITUS, DRIXA, TERPANDER, ACROS.

DRIXA.

Most noble Anitus, we have all been wronged: you are tricked as well as myself: this vile Socrates has given away three parts of his fortune on purpose to spite you: you must take ample revenge of him.

ANITUS.

I design it: heaven itself requires it of me: this man treats me with contempt, and of course must despise the gods. Already we have had several accusations against him, we must repeat them, you will all assist me: we will put him in danger of his life, then will I offer him my protection, on condition that he resigns Aglae to me, and to you the beautiful Sophronimus: thus we shall all gain our several points: he will be sufficiently punished by the fright we shall put him into: I shall get my mistress, and you your lover.

DRIXA.

Wisdom herself speaks in Anitus: sure some divinity inspires you: but tell us, how are we to proceed?

ANITUS.

This is about the time when the judges go to the tribunal, with Melitus at the head of them.

DRIXA.

That Melitus is a little pedant, a sad fellow, and your enemy.

ANITUS.

He is so; but he is still a greater enemy to Socrates; 'tis a rascally hypocrite who supports the rights of the Areopagus against me: but we always hold together when our mutual interest and business is to destroy these pretended wise men, who want to open the eyes of people on our conduct: hearken, my dear Drixa, you are a devotee.

DRIXA.

Certainly, my lord, I love money, and I love pleasure with all my soul, but in matters of devotion I yield to none.

ANITUS.

Go then immediately, and get together as many bawling enthusiasts as you can, and cry out, impiety! impiety.

TERPANDER.

Is there anything to be got by it? if there is, we are all ready.

ACROS.

Ay, ay, that we are; but what sort of impiety?

ANITUS.

O every kind: however, we had best accuse him at once of not believing in the gods; that's the shortest way.

DRIXA.

O let me alone then.

ANITUS.

You shall be well supported; go, and stir up your friends under the portico: I'll inform meantime some of my news-loving friends of it, who come

frequently to dine with me, a parcel of contemptible fellows they are, to be sure, but such as, if properly directed, can do a good deal of mischief on occasion: we must make use of every expedient to promote a good cause: away, my friends, recommend yourselves to Ceres, and be ready to cry out when I give you the signal: 'tis the only way for you to live happy here, and gain heaven hereafter.

SCENE VII.

ANITUS, GRAPHIUS, CHOMUS, BERTILLUS.

ANITUS.

Most indefatigable Graphius, profound Chomus, and delicate Bertillus, have you finished those little works as I commanded you against the impious Socrates?

GRAPHIUS.

My lord, I have labored: he'll never hold up his head again.

CHOMUS.

I have proved the fact against him; struck him dumb.

BERTILLUS.

I have only mentioned him in my journal, and it has done for him.

ANITUS.

Graphius, beware, you know I forbade your prolixity: you are naturally tedious, and that may wear out the patience of the court.

GRAPHIUS.

My lord, 'tis all in one leaf: wherein I have proved that the soul is an infused quintessence; that tails were given to animals to drive away flies; that Ceres works miracles; and consequently, that Socrates is an enemy to the state, and ought to be exterminated.

ANITUS.

A most excellent conclusion! remember to carry your accusation to the second judge, who is a complete philosopher. I'll answer for it, you'll soon get rid of your enemy Socrates.

GRAPHIUS.

My lord, I am not his enemy: I am only vexed that he has so great a reputation: all that I do is for the glory of Ceres, and the good of my country.

ANITUS.

Well, well, make haste and be gone: and you, learned Chomus, what have you done?

CHOMUS.

My lord, finding nothing reprehensible in the writings of Socrates. I shall accuse him point-blank of thinking directly opposite to what he says, and shall show the poison he intends to spread in everything he is to say hereafter.

ANITUS.

Wonderful indeed! carry your piece to the fourth judge: he has not common sense, and therefore will understand you perfectly: now for you, Bertillus.

BERTILLUS.

My lord, here is my last journal upon the Chaos. I have proved, by a regular series from the Chaos

to the Olympics, that Socrates perverts the youth of Athens.

ANITUS.

Admirable! go you from me to the seventh judge, and tell him I desire he'd take care of Socrates; so; here comes Melitus already, the first of the eleven; there's no necessity of practising any art with him, we know each other too well.

SCENE VIII.

ANITUS, MELITUS.

ANITUS.

Mr. Judge, one word with you: this Socrates must be destroyed.

MELITUS.

Indeed, Mr. High Priest, I have long thought so: let us agree in this point; we may quarrel, you know, notwithstanding, about everything else.

ANITUS.

I know we hate each other most cordially: but at the same time we may lay our heads together to govern the commonwealth.

MELITUS.

With all my heart, nobody can overhear us: therefore, to speak freely, I know you are a rogue, and you don't look upon me as a very honest man: I can't hurt you because you are high priest, nor you me because I am first judge; but Socrates may do us both a mischief, by exposing us to the world;

our first business, therefore, is to destroy him, and then we may be at leisure to fall upon each other the first opportunity.

ANITUS.

[*Aside.*

'Tis well observed: how I could rejoice now to see this rascally judge upon an altar, his arms hanging on one side and his legs on the other, whilst I with my golden knife was ripping up his guts and consulting his liver at leisure!

MELITUS.

[*Aside.*

Shall I never be able to send this villainous high priest to jail, and make him swallow a pint of hemlock by my command?

ANITUS.

O my friend, here come our noble assistants. I have taken care to prepare the populace.

MELITUS.

Very well, my dear friend, you may depend upon me in this affair, not forgetting old scores.

SCENE IX.

ANITUS, MELITUS, *some of the Judges of Athens passing along under the portico.*

[*Anitus whispers Melitus.*

DRIXA, TERPANDER, and ACROS together.

Justice, justice, scandal, impiety, justice, justice, irreligion, impiety, justice!

ANITUS.

What's the matter, my friends, what's your complaint?

DRIXA, TERPANDER, and ACROS.

Justice! in the name of the people.

MELITUS.

Against whom?

DRIXA, TERPANDER, and ACROS.

Against Socrates.

MELITUS.

Ha! ha! against Socrates? that fellow has been often accused: what has he done now?

ACROS.

I don't know what.

TERPANDER.

They say he gives money to young girls in marriage.

ACROS.

Ay, he corrupts our youth.

DRIXA.

O he's a wicked wretch: he has offered up no cakes to Ceres; he says there is a great deal of useless gold and silver in the temple.

ACROS.

Ay, and he says the priests of Ceres get drunk sometimes; that's true; he's a wicked wretch indeed.

DRIXA.

He's a heretic; he denies the plurality of gods; he's a deist: he believes only in one God; he's an atheist.

ALL THREE TOGETHER.

Yes; he's a heretic, a deist, and an atheist.

MELITUS.

Dreadful accusations indeed, and all extremely probable: I have heard as much before.

ANITUS.

The state is in danger if we leave such crimes unpunished: Minerva will withdraw her protection from us.

DRIXA.

Ay, that she will, I have heard him laugh at Minerva's owl.

MELITUS.

At Minerva's owl! O heaven! gentlemen, is not it your opinion he ought to be sent to prison immediately?

THE JUDGES.

[*All together.*

To prison with him, to prison.

MELITUS.

Guards, carry Socrates to prison this instant.

DRIXA.

And afterwards let him be burned without a hearing.

ONE OF THE JUDGES.

No, no; we must hear him; we must not go against the law.

ANITUS.

No, no; that's what the good woman meant: we must hear him, but not let what he says have too much effect on us; you know these philosophers are

devilish subtle: 'tis they who have disturbed all those nations which we have endeavored to render peaceable and quiet.

MELITUS.

To prison with him, to prison.

SCENE X.

XANTIPPE, SOPHRONIMUS, AGLAE, SOCRATES, *in chains.*

[*Entering.*

XANTIPPE.

O mercy, mercy, my poor husband is going to prison; aren't you ashamed, Mr. Judges, to treat a man of his years in this manner? What harm could he do? Alas! it is not in his power, he is more fool than knave, God knows; have pity on him, good gentlemen. O my dear, I told you you would draw yourself into some bad affair. This comes of portioning young girls. What an unhappy creature I am!

SOPHRONIMUS.

O my lords, respect his age, respect his virtue; give me his chains! I am ready to yield up my liberty, my life for his.

AGLAE.

Yes; we will go to prison in his stead; we will die for him: do not destroy the noblest, best of men: take us rather for your victims.

MELITUS.

You see how he corrupts our youth.

SOCRATES.

No more, my wife, no more, my children; do not oppose the will of heaven, which speaks by the laws: he who resists the law, is no longer a citizen. God wills that I should be put in bondage; I submit to his divine decree without murmur, or repining. In my own house, in Athens, or in a prison, I am equally free; and whilst I behold in you so much gratitude, and so much friendship, I am happy. What matters it whether Socrates sleeps in his own chamber, or in a prison? Everything is as the supreme will ordains, and my will should submit to it.

MELITUS.

Take away this reasoner.

ANITUS.

Gentlemen, what he says I must own has affected me; the man seems to have a good disposition; I flatter myself I should be able to convert him; let me have a little private conversation with him; please to order his wife and these young folks to retire.

ONE OF THE JUDGES.

Most venerable Anitus, you have our consent to parley with him before he appears at the tribunal.

SCENE XI.

ANITUS, SOCRATES.

ANITUS.

Most virtuous Socrates, my heart bleeds to see you in this condition.

SOCRATES.

And have you a heart?

ANITUS.

I have, and one that feels for you: I am ready to do everything for you.

SOCRATES.

I think you have done enough already.

ANITUS.

Hark ye, Socrates, your situation is worse than you think it is; let me tell you, your life is in danger.

SOCRATES.

That is of very little consequence.

ANITUS.

To your noble soul it may appear so, but it is otherwise in the eyes of all those who, like me, admire your virtue: believe me, however you may be armed by philosophy, it is dreadful to die a death of ignominy: but that is not all; your reputation, which should be dear to you, will be sullied in after ages: the religious of both sexes will laugh at your fall, and insult you: if you are burned, they'll light the pile; if you're strangled, they'll tie the cord; if you're poisoned, they'll pound the hemlock; and not only that, but they'll make your memory execrable to all posterity. Now it is in your own power to prevent all this: I will promise not only to save your life, but even to persuade your judges to say with the oracle, that you are the wisest of men: you have nothing to do but to give me up your young pupil, Aglae, with the portion; you understand me: as to her marriage with Sophronimus, we shall find

means to set it aside: thus you will enjoy a peaceful and honorable old age, and the gods and goddesses will bless you.

SOCRATES.

Soldiers, conduct me to prison immediately.

[*He is carried off.*

ANITUS.

This fellow is incorrigible; but it's not my fault; I have done my duty, and have nothing to reproach myself with: he must be abandoned as a reprobate, and left to die in his sins.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

THE JUDGES *seated on the Tribunal,* SOCRATES *below.*

JUDGE.

[*To Anitus.*

You should not sit here, you are priest of Ceres.

ANITUS.

I am only here for edification.

MELITUS.

Silence there: Socrates, you are accused of being a bad citizen, of corrupting youth, of denying a plurality of gods, of being a heretic, deist, and atheist: answer to the charge.

SOCRATES.

Judges of Athens, I exhort you all to be as good citizens as I have always myself endeavored to be: to shed your blood for your country, as I have done in many a battle: with regard to youth, guide

them by your counsels, and, above all, direct them by your example; teach them to love true virtue, and to avoid the miserable philosophy of the schools: the article concerning a plurality of gods is a little more difficult to discuss, but hear what I have to say upon it. Know then, ye judges of Athens, there is but one God.

MELITUS *and another judge.*

O the impious wretch!

SOCRATES.

I say, there is but one God, in his nature infinite, nor can any being partake of his infinity. Turn your eyes towards the celestial globes, to the earth and seas; all correspond together, all are made one for the other: each being is intimately connected with other beings, all formed with one design, by one great architect, one sole master, and preserver: perhaps he hath deigned to create genii, and demons, more powerful and more wise than men; if such exist, they are creatures like you, his first subjects, not gods: but nothing in nature proves to us that they do exist, whilst all nature speaks one God and one father: this God hath no need of Mercury and Iris to deliver his commands to us: he hath only to will, and that is enough. If by Minerva you understand no more than the wisdom of God; if by Neptune you only mean his immutable laws, which raise or depress the sea, you may still reverence Neptune and Minerva, provided that under these emblems you adore none but the supreme being, and that the people are not deceived by you into false opinions.

Be careful above all not to turn religion into metaphysics, its essence is morality: dispute not,

but worship. If our ancestors believed that the supreme God came down into the arms of Alcmene, Danæ, and Semele, and had children by them, our ancestors imagined dangerous and idle fables. 'Tis an insult on the divinity to conceive that he could possibly, in any manner whatsoever, commit with woman the crime which we call adultery. It is a discouragement to the rest of mankind to say that, to be a great man, it is necessary to be produced from the mysterious union of Jupiter and one of our own wives and daughters. Miltiades, Cimon, Themistocles, and Aristides, whom you persecuted, were perhaps much greater than Perseus, Hercules, or Bacchus. The only way to become the children of God, is to endeavor to please him. Deserve therefore that title, by never passing an unjust sentence.

MELITUS.

What insolence! what blasphemy!

ANOTHER JUDGE.

What absurdities! one can't tell what he means.

MELITUS.

Socrates, you are always too fond of argument: answer briefly, and with precision: did you, or did you not, laugh at Minerva's owl?

SOCRATES.

Judges of Athens, take care of your owls; when you propose ridiculous things as objects of belief too many are apt to resolve that they will believe nothing: they have sense enough to find out that your doctrine is absurd, though they have not elevation of mind sufficient to discover the law of truth; they know how to laugh at your little deceits, but not to adore the first of beings, the one incom-

prehensible, incommunicable being, the eternal, all-just, and all-powerful God.

MELITUS.

O the blasphemer! the monster! he has said too much already: I condemn him to death.

MANY OF THE JUDGES.

And so do we.

ONE OF THE JUDGES.

Several of us are of another opinion; Socrates has spoken wisely; we believe men would be more wise and just if they thought like him: for my part, far from condemning him, I think he ought to be rewarded.

MANY OF THE JUDGES.

We think so too.

MELITUS.

The opinions seem to be divided.

ANITUS.

Gentlemen of the Areopagus, permit me to interrogate him a little. Do you believe, Socrates, that the sun turns round, and that the Areopagus acts by divine right?

SOCRATES.

You have no authority to ask any questions, but I have authority to teach you what you are ignorant of: it is of little importance to society, whether the sun or the earth turns round, but it is of the utmost consequence, whether the men who turn with them be just or unjust: virtue only acts from the right divine, and you and the Areopagus have no rights but those which your country has bestowed on you.

ANITUS.

Illustrious and most equitable judges, let Socrates retire.

[*Melitus makes a sign, Socrates is carried out.*

ANITUS.

[*Proceeds.*

Most august Areopagus, instituted by heaven, you hear what he says: this dangerous fellow denies that the sun turns round, and that you act by right divine: if these opinions prevail, adieu to magistracy, and adieu to the sun: you are no longer judges appointed by Minerva; you will become accountable for your proceedings; you must no longer determine but according to the laws; and if you once depend on the laws, you are undone: punish rebellion therefore, revenge earth and heaven: I am going: dread you the anger of the gods if Socrates is permitted to live.

[*Anitus goes out, and the Judges demur.*

ONE OF THE JUDGES.

I don't care to quarrel with Anitus; he is a dangerous man to offend. If he troubled himself with the gods only it would not signify.

ANOTHER JUDGE.

[*To his brother sitting near him.*

Between you and me, Socrates is in the right; but then he should not be in the right so publicly. I care no more for Ceres and Neptune than he does; but he should not speak out to the whole Areopagus what he ought to have whispered: yet after all, what is there in poisoning a philosopher, especially when he is old and ugly?

ANOTHER JUDGE.

If there be any injustice in condemning Socrates, it is Anitus' business and not mine: I lay it all upon his conscience: besides, it grows late, we lose our time; let us talk no more about it: to death with him.

ANOTHER.

Ay, ay, they say he's a heretic, and an atheist; to death with him.

MELITUS.

Call Socrates.

[*He is brought in.*

Blessed be the gods, the plurality of voices is for death; Socrates, the gods by us condemn you to drink hemlock.

SOCRATES.

We are all mortal: nature condemns you also to death in a short time, probably you may meet with a more unhappy end than mine: the distempers which bring on death are much more painful than a cup of hemlock. I thank those amongst my judges who pleaded in favor of innocence; for the rest, they have my pity.

ONE OF THE JUDGES.

[*Going out.*

Certainly this man deserved a pension from the state, rather than a cup of poison.

ANOTHER JUDGE.

I think so too; but why would he quarrel with a priest of Ceres?

ANOTHER.

After all, it is best to get rid of a philosopher:

those fellows have always a certain fierceness of spirit which should be damped a little.

ANOTHER.

One word with you, gentlemen: would not it be right, whilst our hand is in, to make an end of all the geometricians, who pretend that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones? they are a mighty scandal to the foolish people that read their works.

ANOTHER.

Ay, ay, we'll hang them all the next session; let's go to dinner.

SCENE II.

SOCRATES.

[*Alone.*

I have been long prepared for death; all I fear at present is, that my wife Xantippe will be troubling me in my last moments, and interrupt me in the sweet employment of recollecting my soul, and preparing myself for eternity: I ought to busy myself only in the contemplation of that supreme being, before whom I am soon to appear: but here she comes; I must be resigned to all things.

SCENE III.

SOCRATES, XANTIPPE, *with the Disciples of Socrates.*

XANTIPPE.

Well, my poor man, what have these gentlemen

of the law concluded? have they fined you, are you banished, or acquitted? my God! how uneasy have I been about you! pray take care this don't happen a second time.

SOCRATES.

No, my dear, this will not happen a second time, I'll answer for it; give yourself no uneasiness about anything. My dear disciples, my friends, welcome.

CRITO.

[*At the head of his disciples.*

You see us, beloved Socrates, no less concerned for you than Xantippe; we have gained permission of the judges to visit you; just heaven! must we behold Socrates in chains! permit us to kiss those bonds which reflect shame on Athens. How could Anitus and his friends reduce you to this condition?

SOCRATES.

Let us think no more of these trifles, my friends, but continue the examination we were making yesterday into the soul's immortality. We observed, I remember, that nothing could be more probable, or at the same time more full of comfort and satisfaction, than this sweet idea; in fact, matter we know changes, but perishes not; why then should the soul perish? can it be that, raised as we are to the knowledge of a God through the veil of this mortal body, we should cease to know him when that veil is removed? no, as we think now, we must always think; thought is the very essence of man; and this being must appear before a just God, who will recompense virtue, punish vice, and pardon weakness and error.

XANTIPPE.

Nobly said: but what does this fellow here with his cup?

[*Enter the Jailer, or Executioner of the Eleven, carrying a cup of Hemlock.*

JAILER.

Here Socrates, the senate have sent you this.

XANTIPPE.

Thou vile poisoner of the commonwealth, would you kill my husband before my face? monster, I'll tear you to pieces.

SOCRATES.

My dear friend, I ask your pardon for my wife's rude behavior: she has scolded me all her life; she only treats you as she does her husband; excuse her impertinence: give me the cup.

[*He takes the cup.*

ONE OF THE DISCIPLES.

O divine Socrates! why may not we take that poison for you? horrible injustice! shall the guilty thus condemn the innocent, and fools destroy the wise? you go then to death!

SOCRATES.

No, my friends, to life: this is the cup of immortality: it is not this perishable body that has loved and instructed you; it is my soul alone that has lived with you, and that shall love you forever.

[*He is going to drink.*

JAILER.

I must take off your fetters first; 'tis always done.

SOCRATES.

Do it then, I beg you.

[*He scratches his leg.*

ONE OF THE DISCIPLES.

You smile!

SOCRATES.

I smile at the reflection, that pleasure should arise from pain: thus it is that eternal felicity shall spring from the miseries of this life.

[*Drinks the poison.*

CRITO.

Alas! what have you done?

XANTIPPE.

Ay, for a thousand ridiculous discourses of this kind the poor man has lost his life: indeed, my dear, you will break my heart; I could strangle all the judges with my own hands. I did use to scold you indeed, but I always loved you notwithstanding; these polite well-bred gentlemen have put you to death: O my dear, dear husband!

SOCRATES.

Be calm, my good Xantippe; weep not, my friends; it becomes not the disciples of Socrates to shed tears.

CRITO.

How can we avoid it on so dreadful an occasion? this legal murder!

SOCRATES.

Thus it is that men will often behave to the worshippers of one true God, and the enemies of superstition.

CRITO.

And must Socrates be one of those unhappy victims?

SOCRATES.

'Tis noble to be the victim of the deity: I die contented. I wish indeed that, to the satisfaction of seeing you, my friends, I could have added the happiness of embracing Sophronimus and Aglae: I wonder they are not here: they would have made my last moments more welcome.

CRITO.

Alas! they know not that you have already undergone the judges' dreadful sentence: they have been talking to the people, and praising those magistrates who would have acquitted you. Aglae has laid open the guilt of Anitus, and published his shame and dishonor: they perhaps might have saved your life: O dear Socrates, why would you thus precipitate your fate?

SCENE the last.

AGLAE, SOPHRONIMUS.

AGLAE. [*Entering.*

Divine Socrates, be not afraid: be comforted, Xantippe: worthy disciples of Socrates, do not weep.

SOPHRONIMUS.

Your enemies are confounded: the people rise in your defence.

AGLAE.

We have been talking to them; we have laid open

the intrigues and jealousy of the wicked Anitus: it was my duty to demand justice for his crime, as I was the cause of it.

SOPHRONIMUS.

Anitus hath saved himself by flight from the rage of the people: he and his accomplices are pursued: solemn thanks have been given to those judges who appeared in your favor: the people are now at the gates of the prison, and wait to conduct you home in triumph.

XANTIPPE.

Alas! 'tis lost labor!

ONE OF THE DISCIPLES.

O Socrates, why would you so hastily obey?

AGLAE.

Live, dear Socrates, the benefactor of your country, the model of future ages; O live for the general happiness of mankind!

CRITO.

Ye noble pair, my virtuous friends, it is too late.

XANTIPPE.

You stayed too long.

AGLAE.

Alas! too late? what mean you? just heaven!

SOPHRONIMUS.

Has he then already drunk the fatal draught?

SOCRATES.

Sweet Aglae and dear Sophronimus, the law ordained that I should take the poison: I obeyed

the law, unjust as it is, because it oppressed myself alone: had the injustice been done to another, I would have resisted it. I go to death, but the example of friendship which you give the world, and your nobleness of soul shall never perish: your virtue is greater, much greater, than the guilt of those who accused me. I bless that fate which the world may call misfortune, because it hath set in the fairest light the goodness of your hearts. My dear Xantippe, be happy; and remember, that to be so, you must curb your impetuous temper. My beloved disciples, listen always to the voice of that philosophy which will teach you to despise your persecutors, and pity human weakness: and you, my daughter Aglae, and my son Sophronimus, be always what you now are.

AGLAE.

How wretched are we that we cannot die for you!

SOCRATES.

Your lives are valuable, mine would have been useless: take my tender last farewell; the doors of eternity are opened to receive me.

XANTIPPE.

He was a great man! O I will rouse up the whole nation.

SOPHRONIMUS.

May we raise up temples to Socrates, if ever mortal man deserved it!

CRITO.

At least may his wisdom teach mankind that temples should be raised to God alone!

End of the Third and Last Act.

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